The Mystery of Phanaticism.

OR, THE

ARTIFICES OF DISSENTERS

To Support their

SCHISM.

Together with the

Evil and *Danger* of them.

Set forth in Several

Letters to a FRIEND.

Wherein is made appear, That nothing but the Subtilty and Cunning of their Teachers, doth now hinder the People from Conformity.

By a Divine of the Church of England.

2 Cor. 2. 11. *We are not ignorant of* [their] *Devices.*

London: Printed for *T. Leigh*, at the *Peacock* in *Fleetstreet*; and *R. Knaplock*, at the *Angel and Crown* in St. *Paul's Church-Yard.* 1698.

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THE PREFACE.

THE DISSENTING *Cauſe being in a great meaſure deſerted in Point of Argument, is now merely upheld by Artifice; and what it wants of Reaſon and Truth, is ſupplied by Subtilty and Cunning. And becauſe the Diſcovery hereof may help to undeceive and open the Eyes of ſome well-meaning, but unwary People, it may not be altogether an unprofitable Task, to lay open theſe Devices, that they may the better ſee how they are gull'd, and be the more aware of the Impoſture.*

Truth (we know) is willing to be ſeen with open Face, and hath that Native

Beauty and Luſtre, that needs no Paint or Varniſh to recommend it: But Error hath ſo foul and ugly a Complexion, that makes it need and covet a Vizor to hide its Deformity, and can only be ſet forth by Falſe and Artificial Colours. We read of ſome mens Works, that they cannot bear the Light, and therefore come not to
Joh. 3. 20. *it*, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved: *Such as theſe do but act a Part in Religion, and only play the Zealous and Devout; and are indeed to be ſhunn'd and deteſted of all men, as the worſt of Impoſtors; for they at once mock God, and deceive the People, and proſtitute the beſt things to the worſt and vileſt purpoſes.*

And that too many ſuch there are, our unhappy Age can ſadly teſtify: For may we not daily ſee the Sons of Craft acting under various Diſguiſes, and wheedling the People with their Pious Frauds? Do they not work upon the Weakneſs of ſome, the Wilfulneſs of others, and the Diſcontents of all, to ſerve their own Ends upon them? And like Spiritual Mountebanks, cry up their Infallible Medicines for the Cure of Souls, merely to draw in and deceive the unthinking Multitude.

They

They are ſufficiently acquainted both with the Ignorance and the Headineſs of the Vulgar, and apply themſelves to them accordingly; following that known Rule, Si populus vult decipi decipiatur. *With this untemper'd Mortar do the Architects of Schiſm build their* Babel, *laying Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Chriſtianity, which they at the ſame time undermine by their Hollowneſs and Hypocriſy.*

Our Bleſſed Saviour forewarned his Followers of ſuch falſe Teachers, that ſhould come to them in ſheeps cloathing, Mat. 7. 15. *that is, with ſoft and ſmooth Pretences, but inwardly were* ravening wolves, *dividing the Flock, that they may the more eaſily devour them, and making a Prey of them whom they pretend to feed. Theſe he afterward deſcrib'd by their divided Dialect, one ſaying,* Lo, here is Chriſt, Mat. 24. and another, there. *And when things come to this paſs, that one ſaith,* Behold, 23, 26. he is in the field; *another,* he is in the ſecret chambers; *a third, in the Conventicle; 'tis time to hearken to our Saviour's Advice,* Believe them not, and go not after them.

The

The Apoſtles likewiſe foretold of ſuch
Acts 20. 29, 30. *Seducers, that would* ariſe in the latter days, ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw diſciples after them: *Deſcribing them ſometimes by their* deſpiſing dominions, and ſpeaking evil of dignities: *At other times more plainly pointing at them, by*
Jude, v. 8. 2 Tim. 3. 6. *their* creeping into houſes, and leading captive ſilly women, laden with divers luſts; *thus beguiling the Weaker Sex, who being led more by their Paſſions than Reaſon, are more eaſily ſeduc'd by them. And therefore we are exhorted, to* mark
Rom. 16. 17. them that cauſe diviſions, and avoid them; for they ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly, and with good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple.

And as Chriſt and his Apoſtles have thus forewarn'd us of falſe Teachers, who by their ſubtle Inſinuations would (if it were poſſible) deceive the very elect; *ſo have they foretold the Giddineſs and Inſtability of ſome among the People, who would hearken too much to their falſe Inſinuations, and be eaſily deluded by them. Theſe are deſcrib'd by their unwillingneſs*
2 Tim. 4. 3. *to hear and* endure ſound doctrine, *and*

heaping

heaping to themſelves teachers, having itching ears; *by which means they would* turn from the truth, and be turned unto fables. *Both theſe Predictions are unhappily fulfill'd in our Days, which affords too many ſad Inſtances both of the cunning Craftineſs of ſome who lye in wait to deceive, and the too great Eaſineſs and Willingneſs of others to be deceived by them.*

So that we are certainly fallen into theſe perilous Times, in which the Apoſtle foretold, that men ſhould be lovers of themſelves, traytors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God; having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof; *of whom he wills all wiſe men to beware, and to* turn from them. 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2, &c.

Indeed there hath been no Age ſince the Apoſtles, wholly free from Schiſmaticks and Impoſtors; but perhaps none ever afforded ſuch Swarms of them, as our unhappy days, in which, like the Flies of Egypt, *they are ſtill buzzing in the ears of the people, and like the Frogs croaking in all corners of the Land.*

It will not therefore be amiſs, to expoſe to Publick View the Frauds and Fallacies of Falſe Teachers, to lay open the Evil and Danger of them, that if we cannot wholly cure the Schiſm, we may preſerve as many as poſſible from the Contagion of it.

Farewell.

LET-

LETTER I.

SIR,

I Remember my Promiſe of giving you ſome account of the Artifices of Diſſenters to ſupport their Schiſm: And though this Myſtery of Iniquity hath ſome depths and intriegues that are out of the reach of a vulgar eye; yet there are other Devices that lie more open, and may be eaſily diſcern'd by an ordinary Obſerver.

And here the

Firſt thing that occurs to our view, is their great zeal and diligence in making Proſelytes; in which they imitate, if not outdo, the zeal of the *Phariſees*, *who compaſs ſea and land to make a proſelyte.* Matt. 23. 15.

This unwearied diligence of the *Phariſees*, is remark'd by our Saviour as an inſtance of their Hypocriſy.

And the *Jewiſh* Writers tell us how they uſed their utmoſt endeavours in hunting after Proſelytes, not for their good, but their own gain; that they might ſome way or other drain their Purſes after they had drawn them into their Sect: They ſpared no pains among all ſorts of Perſons, but eſpecially among the Richer Widows, whom by their ſubtle attractives they deſpoil'd of a great part of their Subſtance: The Scripture hath recorded of them, *That they devoured widows houſes*, by their long Prayers; which they made to ſerve as a long Grace to hallow and ſanctifie their Oppreſſion. In a word, they fiſh'd for Proſelytes every where, and made a prey of all that they drew into their Net. And herein they are equall'd, if not exceeded by our Diſſenting Brethren; the art and induſtry uſed by them to this purpoſe, being too well known to need any proof.

Matt. 23. 14.

The chief things to be remark'd under this Head, are,

1*ſt*. The Perſons of whom theſe Proſelytes conſiſt. 2*dly*. Whence they are gathered: And 3*dly*. What they are Proſelyted to.

For

For the Parties on whom this Game is plaid: They are not any Perſons of Education and Parts, who can ſee through the diſguiſe, and diſcover the Impoſture; but the weak and illiterate Vulgar; whoſe want of Judgment renders them the more eaſy and liable to ſeduction.

And here their great buſineſs is to flatter and humour the common People, who are the ſole Props and Members of the Conventicle; being fearful and tender of diſpleaſing them, leſt they ſhould fly off, and *Dagon* fall with them; and therefore we are told by a wiſe Obſerver of their ways, That the People are moſt truly the Guides, and that the Paſtors muſt follow them whom they pretend to Conduct; which ſhews them to be rather Men-pleaſers than the Servants of God.

But whence are theſe Proſelytes taken? Why, out of the Parochial Eſtabliſhed Churches, for they can be taken no where elſe; and we all know that the Conventicle is made up of a few ſtraggling Sheep gathered out of other Flocks, and drawn from the true Fold of the Catholick Church.

Now theſe Parochial Churches, being by the Diſſenters themſelves acknowledged to be true Churches of Chriſt; this can be no other than gathering Churches out of Churches; a thing ſeverely Condemn'd by the *Puritans* of old, in the *Brownists*; and by the *Presbyterians* of late, in the *Independents*, and other Sectaries. If you will peruſe the Presbyterian Writings, and particularly the *Jus Divinum Regiminis Eccleſiaſtici*, the exacteſt Book that hath been written by them, "*You will find* "*this practice of gathering Churches out* "*of Churches, and ſetting up ſeparate* "*Meetings againſt an Eſtabliſhed Church,* "*bitterly inveigh'd againſt as the Mother* "*of Confuſion, the Nurſe of Schiſm,* "*and the Step-mother of Edification.*

How comes the caſe then to be thus alter'd, That gathering Churches out of Churches, which was formerly a heinous Crime, ſhould now become not only a harmleſs thing, but a neceſſary Duty? And what was ſo fiercely diſputed againſt as a grievous Faction, ſhould now be ſo earneſtly contended for, as if it were the *faith once delivered to the ſaints*? What is it that hath made this change? Is Vice of a ſudden turn'd in-

to Virtue? Or hath the Mother of Confuſion chang'd the Breed, and brought forth a purer way of Worſhip and Devotion? No; the Myſtery of it is, That the Presbyterians upon the diſſolution of the Government, which they had in a great meaſure occaſion'd, fed themſelves with hopes of being uppermoſt, and laboured hard to bring the other Sects, that grew up under them, to the lure of their Diſcipline; and Then ſetting up Altar againſt Altar, and gathering Churches out of Churches, were vile and abominable things; but finding themſelves oppos'd, and indeed over-top'd by the Independents, and by the Re-eſtabliſhment of the Church upon its ancient Foundation, utterly defeated of all their hopes, they began then to play the ſame game, and leſt they ſhould be left in the lurch, fell a gathering Diſciples as faſt as the other Sectaries. And then all their own Arguments taken from Peace and Unity, which were very ſtrong whilſt they made for Them, of a ſudden loſt all their force when they were turned againſt them. Moſt rare and well-grounded Divinity!

But what is it that theſe Induſtrious Men ſeek to make Proſelytes to? Is it to the embracing of Chriſtianity, or the practice of real Piety and Virtue? No; this were a very charitable and commendable Zeal indeed; but 'tis to a Party, a Faction; to a Schiſm, or Separation from a true Church, which they themſelves have branded for the ſink of Error, and the inlet of all Confuſion. So that if the People would but open their Eyes, they might eaſily ſee their Leaders acting againſt their own Principles, and might condemn them out of their own mouths.

But what is the end or deſign of this great diligence in making Proſelytes? Why, the plain deſign of it is the weakning the eſtabliſhed Church by drawing the Members from it; the ſtrengthning their own Party by adding Followers to it, and by degrees undermining the Government in Church and State, to draw the Power and Intereſt of both into their own hands. Great and noble deſigns indeed! not for the publick Good, but their own private Intereſt and Ambition. And yet theſe apparently lie at the bottom of theſe endeavours.

Now

Now this will lead us to conſider the evil and danger of ſuch Practices, and that as well to the Parties Proſelyted, as thoſe that Proſelyte them.

St. *Paul* ſharply rebuked this way of Proſelyting, or Party-taking among the *Corinthians*, though they made ſome of the Apoſtles, yea, Chriſt himſelf to be one of the Heads of the Party; *while one ſaith, I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, another I am of Cephas, another I am of Chriſt; are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* Yes, as the worſt ſort of men; for ye divide Kingdoms, rend Churches, and tear in piecees the very Body of Chriſt.

Our Bleſſed Saviour was ſo far from commending the Zeal of the *Phariſees* in making Proſelytes to their Sect, that he pronounc'd a Woe againſt them for it; and withal told them, That they made them *twofold more the children of hell then themſelves.* And *Joſephus* tells us, that the Diſciples outdid their Maſters; for they not only became worſe than they were before, but exceeded the Phariſees themſelves in their Hypocriſy and Unbelief. The Imitation outwent the Original, and the Diſciples encouraged by their Doctrine

Matt. 23. 15.

and Example, became much more the children of Wrath and Diſobedience than they were before.

And hath it not happen'd thus with many of the Diſſenters Diſciples, who like apt Scholars have outgone their Maſters? For when they had drawn them from the Church, Have not others ſtarted up who have drawn them from their Conventicles? Are not the ſeveral Heads of the Faction tugging hard to draw Diſciples from one another? And muſt not the People be mightily Edified (think you) to be thus drawn about as with a Cart-rope, and led from one Sect to another by the Cords of Vanity? Yea, Have not ſome by this means been drawn into Atheiſm and Infidelity; and while the contending Parties have been ſtriving for Proſelytes, have not many loſt all their Religion in the ſcuffle? This is too well known by woful experience. So that theſe cannot be term'd Proſelytes of Righteouſneſs; nor are they initiated into a Myſtery of Godlineſs, but Iniquity, being drawn into a Schiſm; which if wilfully perſiſted in, muſt cut them off from the Body of Chriſt, and not only deprive them of the Fellowſhip of the Chriſtian Church here,

here, but for ever exclude them from the Community of the Saints hereafter?

Neither doth the danger hereof affect only the Perſons ſeduced by them, but hath a malign influence upon a whole Church and Kingdom, and is a publick as well as a private Miſchief; for every one that is drawn into a Party, is in effect liſted againſt the Government; and he that is Proſelyted to a Sect, does thereby become an Enemy to the peace and welfare of his Country: For ſuch as theſe draw from the Church to ſupport a Combination againſt it, and ſo weaken the Whole by ſtrengthening a Party.

You know it muſt go ill with the Body, when the Blood and Spirits which ſhould cheriſh the Heart, and fortify all the other Members, leave their natural courſe, and run only to feed a Diſeaſe, Excreſcence, or corrupt Humour: Neither can it fare better with publick Bodies and Societies, when that ſtrength which ſhould be united to preſerve the whole, is carried off to ſupport a Faction; and the bond of Peace and Unity, which ſhould hold the parts together, is broken into ſeveral Sects and Diviſions.

But

But what are the Arts that are made uſe of by Diſſenters to gain Proſelytes, and thereby to uphold, increaſe, and propagate their Schiſm, the diſcovery of theſe ſhall be the ſubject of the enſuing Letters. I am,

SIR,

Your affectionate Friend,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER II.

SIR,

I Gave you an account in my laſt, of the great diligence and induſtry of Diſſenters in making Proſelytes, and drawing Diſciples after them, together with the evil and danger of their ſo doing. But

You are ſatisfied (you tell me) of this their great deſign in endeavouring to increaſe and propagate their Party; but you would fain know by what arts and methods they effect it; that is, how they thus lead the People by the Noſe, and draw ſo many after them. And here to omit ſome of their leſſer arts of inveigling the People, as by affected Tones, mimical Actions and Geſtures, *&c.* which, you know, have a mighty force to draw the Multitude; I ſay, to paſs by theſe, I ſhall give you an account of ſome of the principal Artifices they make uſe of to compaſs their ends. And the

First I ſhall mention of theſe, is their pretence to greater Light and Knowledge than other Men: And herein they are the followers of a Sect in the Apoſtles days, known by the name of *Gnoſticks*; who were ſo call'd from their boaſting of greater Light, and eſteeming themſelves the wiſeſt and moſt knowing of all Perſons.

Now half an Eye may ſee how exactly they are imitated by the Sectaries of our days, who talk much of higher Illuminations, and make frequent boaſts of their greater meaſures and degrees of Knowledge. Nothing is more common in their Mouths, than Goſpel-Diſcoveries, Goſpel-Manifeſtations, new and clearer Revelations; all which are made chiefly, if not only to them; when as others (poor Souls!) are ignorant, and know nothing of theſe Glorious things. They delight to ſpeak of the Darkneſs of former times, and what a glorious Meridian-Light is broke out in their days; which they make to ſhine with a brighter luſtre upon them than any others. You ſhall often hear them pity the Ignorance of ſome men, who, perhaps, know more than themſelves; and pleaſe themſelves with the thoughts

thoughts of their higher Attainments, as if the Day-ſpring from high had viſited them, whereas others were merely be-nighted, and left to walk on ſtill in darkneſs. Their Teachers too are willing enough to cheriſh in them this vain conceit of their great Knowledge, that they may the more admire them from whom they have it; this makes them talk of others as blind ignorant Creatures, void of any Saving-Knowledge of Chriſt, and the Myſteries of the Goſpel; that they have Scales before their Eyes, that are never like to drop off, till they Hear their Teachers, and Eſpouſe their Party. Thus do they applaud the clearneſs and perfection of their own Knowledge, and lament the lack of it in other men, though many times much Wiſer than themſelves.

Now how ſerviceable this is to uphold and increaſe the Party, is obvious to obſerve; for the common People being incompetent Judges of true Wiſdom, are eaſily impos'd upon by the bare ſemblance and appearance of it.

Beſides, this ſo far gratifies the natural Pride and Vanity of Mens Minds, as makes them willing to hearken to thoſe that thus ſoothe and flatter them.

Yea,

Yea, this Artifice hath deceived many a well-meaning Man, who though willing to know and embrace the Truth, have been unhappily miſled by theſe falſe Lights, out of the ways of Truth and Peace. So that this Wile hath an eaſy and natural tendency to deceive, and hath done the Party great ſervice.

But what hath been the effect of this Stratagem? Why, the Evils that have been produc'd by it are many and great.

As Firſt; It hath occaſioned a great deal of Pride, and made many ignorant People talk and look ſcornfully on thoſe that are far above them, both in Parts and Wiſdom; *Knowledge puffeth up*, ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. Yea, a vain Conceit of it will have the ſame effect, though the reality be wanting: A ſmall matter will puff up a bubble; and ſome are ſo prone to this Evil, that a little thing will make them look big, and apt to ſwell with a high opinion of their great Wiſdom. This makes them Heady, Confident, and Aſſuming, thinking themſelves wiſer than their Teachers, and taking upon them to inſtruct their Betters, without any regard

gard to their Learning or Office; yea, this vain conceit of Knowledge hath lifted ſome of them to that high degree of Arrogance, as to ſet up their Light within them above the Holy Scriptures, and to prefer their own Dreams before Divine Revelations. Again,

2dly. This pretence of greater Knowledge occaſions great Contempt and Diſobedience to Authority; for theſe Opinianative Men ſoon become Wiſer than their Governors; they ſee farther into matters than all that are above them, and ſo can eſpy the errors in the Adminiſtration of Affairs: Hence you ſhall find them taxing the Actions of their Superiors, finding fault with their Conduct, and quarrelling with all Orders and Conſtitutions, that are not drawn up by their Model, and appointed as they in their great wiſdom think beſt: They talk much of a Judgment of Diſcretion, which they oppoſe to the Judgment of their Superiors, and by the help of it can lay aſide all Laws and Canons made for publick Peace and Order. And what a pernicious influence this muſt have, not only the nature of the thing, but our

our daily and doleful Experience may eaſily inform us. Moreover,

3dly. This overweaning conceit of great Knowledge, makes men pragmatical medlers in things that belong not to them, invading the Office both of the King and Biſhop; prying into matters of State, as if they were all Privy Councellors; and Expounding the moſt difficult places in Scripture with greater confidence, than the moſt Learned Doctors. Hence you ſhall ſee them creeping into Mens Pariſhes, as if none were able to Lead and Inſtruct their Flock, without their Aſſiſtance, and thruſting themſelves into other Folks buſineſs, as if none had any underſtanding but themſelves. Again,

4thly. This vain conceit of greater Light, makes men Obſtinate and Pertinacious in their private Fancies and Opinions, though never ſo Falſe and Erroneous: We know how difficult a thing it is to reclaim a Schiſmatick; the conceit he hath of his own Knowledge, makes him think he cannot be miſtaken; the Infallibility he denies to the Pope, he aſſumes to himſelf; and vainly thinks, that if other Men did but ſee with his Eyes, they might ſoon diſcern

the

the Truth; and this would make them ſay and do even as he takes himſelf to be, always in the Right; and that 'tis not poſſible for ſo enlighten'd a Perſon as he to be in the Wrong; And what hope can there be of reclaiming ſuch a one, who is reſolv'd and arm'd againſt Conviction? *Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his own conceit,* (ſaith *Solomon*) *there is more hope of a fool than of him,* Prov. 26. 12.

Laſtly. This vain opinion of greater Knowledge, makes them to deſpiſe, cenſure, and condemn the Actions of other Men; for thinking themſelves only in the right, they take all others to be out of the way that go not with them; and never ſo much as dreaming that they can be deceiv'd, pity and ſigh over others as a company of ignorant, blind, and deluded Wretches: Thus are they by this means brought fondly to applaud and admire themſelves, and to look down with contempt and ſcorn on others, though much Wiſer than themſelves. Theſe, and many other are the ſad effects of this Artifice, and plainly proceed from Mens flattering themſelves and others with an

opinion of their greater Light and Knowledge.

Now to ſhew the Vanity of this pretence, we may obſerve,

1*ſt*. That the greateſt pretenders to Knowledge, have commonly the leaſt ſhare of it; a ſmatterer in any Art or Science, that hath ſcarce knowledge enough to ſee his own ignorance, uſually boaſts of higher meaſures and degrees of it, than a Wiſer Man that ſees much farther into it will pretend to, who being ſenſible of his own defects, and how far ſhort he comes of Perfection, is commonly more humble and modeſt: *A wiſe man* (ſaith *Solomon*) *feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth and is confident*, Prov. 14. 16. *If any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*, 1 Cor. 8. 2. We read of ſome that take upon them to be Teachers of others, when themſelves need to be Taught the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God; and of others that are *ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth*, 2 Tim. 3. 7. 'Twas well-obſerv'd by my Lord *Bacon*, "That a little Knowledge is apt to "puff up, and make Men giddy, but a "greater

" greater ſhare of it will ſet them right, " and bring them to low and humble " thoughts of themſelves.

So that this pretence of greater Light, is but a covering for their deeds of Darkneſs; and *if the light within them be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs*, Matth. 6. 23. Beſide,

2*dly*. This boaſt of greater Knowledge is a great bar to all growth and increaſe in it; For what need have they to labour for that, of which they think they have ſo great a ſhare already? This will breed not only a neglect, but contempt of all the means of Knowledge; 'twill make them deaf to Inſtruction, and to ſhut their Eyes againſt the Light, though it flaſhes in their Faces: 'Twas wiſely obſerv'd by the *Roman* Orator, *Multi ad Sapientiam perveniſſent, niſi ſe jam, perveniſſe putaſſent*: " Many might have attain'd to " Wiſdom, were it not for a vain con- " ceit that they had attain'd it already. And indeed, there is no ſuch Ignorant, Arrogant, and Incurable Fop, as a Gifted Brother full of his Viſions and Revelations, who pretends to be above Ordinances, and to be Wiſe above that which is Written.

Laſtly. This vain conceit of greater Knowledge, oft-times leads to a judicial Blindneſs; and they who are ſo apt to Reprobate others, are themſelves given up to a Reprobate ſenſe; *that in ſeeing, they ſhould ſee, but not perceive; and in hearing, they ſhould hear, but not underſtand.* We read of the *Gnoſticks, That when they profeſſed themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools; and being vain in their imaginations, their fooliſh hearts were darken'd*, Rom. 1. 21, 22. God Almighty put out that Light which they vainly pretended to, or wilfully abus'd, and ſuffer'd them to grope on in thick darkneſs. And the ſame Apoſtle tells us of others, who for *not receiving the truth in the love of it, were given up to believe a lie, and carried away with ſtrong deluſions*, 2 Theſſ. 2. 11. And this, 'tis to be feared, is the caſe of too many Sectaries in our Days, who withſtand the cleareſt evidence of Truth, and harden their hearts againſt all Conviction; nothing can make them ſenſible of the error of their ways, though it never ſo plainly appear to be ſo, but will obſtinately perſiſt in their evil courſe againſt all

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the Commands of their Superiors, the Instructions of their Teachers, and the Example of Wise and Holy Men in all Ages; as if they were lull'd asleep in a fatal Security, and seal'd up under final Impenitence. Which is much lamented by,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LETTER III.

SIR,

I Find by your laſt, that you are ſufficiently ſenſible what great ſervice the pretence of greater Light and Knowledge hath done the Diſſenters, and that you plainly ſee the falſhood and malignity of that Artifice. I proceed now to a ſecond, and that is a pretence to greater Strictneſs and Sanctity than other Men; and herein they are the ſucceſſors of the *Phariſees*; who beſide the exacter Knowledge of the Law, pretended to the exacteſt Obſervance and Obedience to it; hence we find them ſtil'd the *ſtricteſt ſect of their Religion*, Acts 26. 5. and are ſaid to *teach and act according to the perfect manner of the law*, Acts 22. 3. Our Saviour himſelf brings in one of them boaſting of his greater Piety, and taking the boldneſs to tell God Almighty in his Prayers, *That he was not as other men, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or the like*, Luk. 18. 11, 12. but had led a ſtricter life, and practic'd

practic'd a higher ſort of Righteouſneſs than other Folk; and leſt God and the world ſhould doubt of the truth of it, he proceeds to many particulars, *viz. That he was frequent in his faſts, punctual in his tythes, liberal in his alms-deeds*, &c. And elſewhere we read of other parts of the *Phariſees* Righteouſneſs; That they were ſtrict obſervers of the Sabbath, careful of their Company for fear of being defil'd by them; long and loud in their Prayers; that they enlarg'd their Philacteries, and garniſh'd the Tombs of the Prophets, as if they deteſted the Cruelty of their Forefathers in putting them to Death; with many other inſtances recorded by the Four Evangeliſts.

How well they are imitated by Diſſenters in making a fair and plauſible ſhew of greater Holineſs, a very ſlender Obſervation may inform us; for you may eaſily obſerve them to look more Demurely, talk more Religiouſly, and ſeem to Pray more Devoutly than other Men; their ſeeming Zeal ſhall carry them many a Mile to a Conventicle, when they may hear a better Sermon at home in their own Church; yea, and ſet them a Repeating Sermons too which

were ſcarce worth the firſt Hearing; and thereby inculcate ſome Doctrines, that were much better doom'd to eternal ſilence and oblivion. Thus do they ſeek to poliſh the outward Garb with a fair and plauſible ſhew of Holineſs; withdrawing from others as Sinners, and not only pretending, but as to outward appearance practiſing too a greater Strictneſs.

Now how uſeful this Artifice is to uphold and increaſe a Party, is eaſy to diſcern; for the common People being led more by their Sences and Imagination, than any ſound Principles of Reaſon, are often impos'd upon by the outſide of Religion; which many times makes a more ſtanting and pompous ſhew, than the inward truth and reality of it, which reſiding in the Heart, lies more hid and undiſcovered: By this means the *Phariſees* got a wonderful intereſt and influence upon the minds of the People, who by a ſhew of greater Religion, ſo drew the Hearts after them, that 'twas Proverbial among them to ſay, That if but Two went to Heaven, the one would be a *Scribe*, and the other a *Phariſee*: And any ordinary Eye may ſee our Diſſenters drawing Diſciples,

Diſciples, and increaſing their Parties by the ſame method.

But have theſe great pretenders all this while any more Religion than other Folk? No; they have more of the ſhew, but not of the ſubſtance; having a *form of godlineſs*, as the Apoſtle foretold of them, *but denying the power thereof.* Our Bleſſed Saviour declar'd of the *Phariſees*, That though they pretended to be better, were yet worſe than other men; for though they had the confidence to thank God they *were not extortioners*, yet he who knew them better than they did themſelves, tells them that they *devour'd widows houſes*, and within were full of *extortion and exceſs*; their Prayers were all made for Vanity and Oſtentation, and their Alms but ſo many Baits to fiſh for Honour and the Applauſe of Men; like whited Sepulchres, they appeared fair and beautiful without, but within were full of rottenneſs and corruption; and though they Garniſhed the Sepulchres of the Prophets, as if they hated the Wickedneſs of thoſe that Killed them, yet they put to Death the Son of God, the great Prophet that was to come, and would have ſhed the blood of all

that

that followed him: So that all their Care and Zeal for the Memory of the Prophets, was only to hide their Cruelty under a ſhew of Kindneſs; and the garniſh'd Tombs were but the painted Monuments of their own Hypocriſy. In a word, as they were ſolicitous about waſhing the outſide of the Cup and Platter, without mattering how foul and ſluttiſh it was within; ſo were they more careful to reform their Looks, than their Lives; and under a diſguiſe of greater Sanctity, contrived and acted the vileſt Enormities.

And are not the like Policies and Practices too viſible in our Modern *Phariſees*; who under a mask of Zeal and Reformation, have conceal'd and carri'd on very bad Deſigns? Have they not a long time put fair Colours upon foul Actions? And made Religion a ſtale and pander to the greateſt Abominations? But that Cloak, which hath hitherto done them great ſervice, begins now to be worn out, long uſe hath made it thredbare, and their Hypocriſy appears through the thinneſs of the Covering; Counterfeit Coin ſeldom keeps its credit long,

long, time wears off the Gilt, and diſcovers the baſeneſs of the Metal. Such is the inconſiſtency of Falſhood and Hypocriſy, that it often betrays it ſelf; and when the paint and varniſh is gone, nothing appears but the deformity; and then the Hypocrite, like the Aſs in the Fable ſtript of the Lion's Skin, ſtands an object of contempt and ſcorn. Thus it happened to the *Phariſees* at laſt, for though they charm'd the People a while, and inveigled many into their Sect by a ſhew of Holineſs, yet the Mask at length fell off, and they became vile and deſpicable to the whole Nation.

But what is the Evil and Miſchief of this Device? Great every way. For,

Firſt; This pretence of greater Holineſs, is oft-times an Inſtrument of much deceit, and helps to carry on very evil deſigns; thus if any have a mind to diſturb or over-turn the Government, to move Sedition, or alter the Laws and Conſtitutions, Religion muſt be pretended; and then a ſeeming Zeal for the publick Good, and Reformation of Abuſes, ſhall

ſhall go a great way to compaſs their ends. If a Man would effectually Cheat his Neighbour, or put the Dice upon him, he pretends to Piety to hide the Juggle, and under a cloak of Religion, acts and covers the fouleſt Frauds. If he would wreek his Malice, or gratify his Spleen againſt any Perſon, he puts on a ſhew of great Meekneſs, looks Solemnly, and pretends the greateſt Love and Kindneſs, and thereby ſecretly wounds and works his own Ends. Thus do Malice, Pride, Covetouſneſs, Revenge, and other vile Enormities, lurk under this diſguiſe, and are carried on under a ſpecious ſhew and pretence of Religion. Again,

2*dly*. This Device is a mocking of God, and a high affront offer'd to our Maker; for he that only gilds and paints the outward Man, without any regard to the Heart, ſhews indeed an Awe and Reverence to Men, who behold and judge only by the outward appearance, but betrays an inſolent contempt and ſlight of God, who looks chiefly to the Heart, and requires Truth in the inner

inner parts; he that ſeeks only to recommend himſelf to the World by fair ſhews and pretences, without approving himſelf to God by the ſincerity of the Heart, plainly bids defiance to Heaven, and ſhews a greater fear of Men than God before his Eyes.

Laſtly. This great pretence to Religion brings oft-times a ſcandal upon Religion it ſelf, and tends to deſtroy and undermine it; for when theſe appear to be only Pretences, and that theſe great ſhews of Holineſs are void of all reality and truth; it makes the Name of Religion odious, and the Profeſſion of it vile and deſpicable in the Eyes of the World: This at once debauches and deſtroys Religion, by drawing out the life of it into mere ſhew and appearance, and making it evaporate into Air and Formality.

Yea, this naturally leads to Atheiſm and Infidelity; for when Men ſee ſo many vile Tricks acted under a colour of greater Holineſs; when Faction and Sedition are gilded over with a ſpe-

a ſpecious pretence of Zeal, and Men proſecute their Ambition and Avarice under the enſigns of Holineſs and Devotion; this makes too many think Religion it ſelf a Trick, and ſo caſt it off as a device of Cunning and Deſigning Men: And 'tis not to be doubted, but the Atheiſm and Infidelity of the preſent Age, is in a great meaſure owing to the Hypocriſy of ſuch Pretenders.

SIR,

I ſuppoſe you plainly ſee the deſign and the danger of this Artifice ſo much us'd by our Diſſenters, which is indeed the Maſter-piece of their Craft, and the principal Engine to draw and deceive the People; they know the Vulgar are eaſily impos'd upon by fair Shews, and fair Speeches, and how willing they are to embrace a Religion that is ſo favourable to their Pride, Luſt, and Worldly Intereſt, and puts them to no trouble about the mortifying of either; for 'tis but to poliſh the outward Man, and make a plauſible appearance of Holineſs, and they need not

take

take care about purifying of the Heart, or rectifying any thing that is amiss within; and 'tis no wonder if so easy a Religion finds many Followers. I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER IV.

SIR,

I Shew'd in my laſt how ſerviceable a pretence of greater Holineſs is to increaſe a Party, and create Diviſions, together with the vanity and miſchief of that Artifice. I proceed in this to a

Third Artifice uſed by Diſſenters to that end; and that is, A pretence to purer Ordinances, and a more Spiritual way of Worſhip; and herein they are the Succeſſors of the *Cathari*, and the *Donatiſts* of old, who pretended to a better and purer way of ſerving God than other Men; and ſo Separated from them, as Saints of a higher Form, and Men of a more rais'd and elevated Devotion.

And herein they are exactly imitated by our Diſſenters, who talk of nothing more than pure Worſhip, pure Ordinances, and pure Adminiſtrations; all which they confine to themſelves, and will not allow others any ſhare in them; yea,

yea, they ſpeak contemptuouſly of others, as ſerving God after an old dead and dull way of Forms, whereas They Pray in a more lively manner by their own Gifts, and have a more Pure, Spiritual, and Evangelical way of Worſhip. They revile the Church of *England* as Popiſh, and ſtile its Worſhip *Antichriſtian*: Our excellent Liturgy paſſeth with them for Maſs-ſervice, and all its decent Ceremonies for Idolatry and Superſtition; the Surplice is a Rag of the Whore of *Babylon*; Bowing at the Name of Jeſus, is no better than Bowing to an Idol; and Kneeling at the Holy Sacrament, as bad as falling down to a Graven Image; they interpret the *form of godlineſs*, mentioned by the Apoſtle, to be a Form of Prayer; and the Power of Godlineſs, to be Praying *Extempore*. One of them tells us, "That the reaſon why the world hates "the Saints, is becauſe they are a Praying People. Now leſt you ſhould take this Malignity to be directed againſt Forms, he tells you, no; Forms of Prayer they can bear well enough, but 'tis the Power of Prayer (that is, *Extempore* Prayer) that they can't endure; as if this were a flight of Devotion

above the reach of Worldly and Carnal Minds, and only ſuited to the more Heavenly and Seraphical Spirit of the Saints.

Now how ſerviceable this Device is to promote the Party, is eaſy to conceive; for it mightily gratifies the vanity of Men's Minds to think, that they are not only more Holy than other Men, but that they ſerve God in a higher and better manner than they; for this makes them believe, with the *Phariſees*, that God rejoices in them, and is mightily pleas'd with them; that they are infinitely dear to him, and that God is highly delighted both with their Perſons and their Prayers. And who that had theſe thoughts, would not gladly enter into the Claſs of ſuch Worſhippers?

Again; This makes them think well of themſelves, and creates no ſmall pleaſure and confidence in their ways, though never ſo Falſe and Erroneous, to think their Prayers are better and more acceptable to God, than other Mens: This makes them infinitely pleaſed with their Service, and endears to them ſuch a way of Worſhip: Yea, it not only tends to invite many into this way,

way, but to make them obſtinate and pertinacious in it, to harden them in their Schiſm, and render it very difficult to reclaim them from it.

But what is that great Purity our Diſſenters thus boaſt of? Is it a greater Purity of Doctrine? No; for herein they acknowledge we agree, and embrace the ſame Faith. Is it a greater Purity of Life? This is indeed pretended, but experience hath abundantly confuted this pretence, and diſcovered the Hypocriſy. Is it then a greater Purity of Worſhip? Yes, this is the great Thing; for Ours (ſay they) is clogg'd with Ceremonies, and mix'd and blended with the Inventions of Men.

But are not their Prayers the Inventions of Men? Yea, Do they not proceed from the preſent and ſudden Conceptions of their own Brain? Which ſure cannot be half ſo Wiſe or Pure, as more deliberate and well-weigh'd Compoſures: And as for Ceremonies, Are not their various and Antick Geſtures in Prayer, which ſerve but to expoſe the Worſhip of God, far more Improper and Impure too, than the decent Ceremonies of the Church, which help to make it more Uniform and Solemn?

Is not hasty Speech delivered in Mimical Postures and Actions, much more unbecoming Divine Service, than a Grave and Well-order'd Devotion?

But their Worship is more Spiritual than others, for they Pray more by the Spirit.

How so? Do their Prayers come more from the Heart and Spirit than other Mens? For that is all the Praying by the Spirit, since the ceasing of Inspiration. And who will presume to judge of that? Yea, Is not the Heart more hinder'd and call'd off in their Prayers, by the Invention of Matter and Words, than in others where both these are prepared to their hands? I hope they do not pretend to Pray by the immediate dictates and suggestions of the Holy Ghost, as the Apostles did; if they do, they must work a Miracle that we may believe them, and then we shall reckon all their Prayers of as great Authority as the Holy Scripture; if they cannot, they must excuse us, if we Condemn their depending upon such divine and sudden Suggestions, of great Rashness and Presumption; and that theirs is so far from a more Spiritual way of Worship, that 'tis rather more

Carnal,

Carnal, and ſcarce deſerves the name of Divine Worſhip.

And yet here lies the great myſtery of this Artifice; for theſe Men take Praying *Extempore*, or by preſent Conceptions, to be Praying by the Spirit, and ſo call it a Spiritual way of Worſhip; whereas Praying by a Form, is ſtil'd Stinting of the Spirit, and ſo that muſt not be allow'd to be Spiritual, but Formal Worſhip; and by this device, they ſet the Ears of the People a itching after the one, and turn them away, or make them deaf to the other.

Now this Fallacy may be eaſily apparent to any, that conſiders, that ſome of the vileſt Wretches, and greateſt Monſters of Impiety that ever liv'd, have been moſt famous for this talent of *Extempore* Prayer; We read of one actually in League with the Devil, who had ſuch a Fluency this way, that he was admir'd by all, but could be imitated by none that came near him; And will any aſcribe the Prayers of ſuch a Wretch, made up of Sorceries and the vileſt Abominations, to the Spirit of God? Are they not rather the Diabolical ſuggeſtions of the Evil Spirit, and to be aſcribed to the true Author the

Vid *Raviliac Redivivus*, Major *Were*.

Devil, who is the Father of all Lies and Impoſtures? And certainly he that conſiders what bad things have been vented in ſuch Prayers, will plainly ſee it to be not only a Belying, but Blaſpheming the Holy Ghoſt, to entitle them to Him.

But 'tis time to ſhew the evil and danger of this device. And,

Firſt; This pretence of Purer Ordinances and purer Worſhip, hath prov'd a principle of great Inſtability and Giddineſs in Religion; for when ſome Men began to refine upon the Eſtabliſhed Church, and ſet up Purer Ordinances, Have not others riſen up who thought them not pure enough, and refin'd again upon them; yea, Does not one Sect continue ſtill refining upon another, and God knows when and where it will end? Have not theſe double and treble Refiners almoſt refin'd away all their Religion, and left little more than the Name and Pretence of it? Is it not dwindled into Air and Speculation, and almoſt loſt in a crowd of endleſs ſcruples and diſputes? How little of the life and ſpirit of Religion appears in Mens lives, and how few can ſhew their Faith by their Works?

Which

Which are the ſad effects of this Reforming and Refining Humour.

Again; This hath made the generality of People deſpiſe all Godly Forms, though far more conducing to the purity of Faith and Devotion, than other newfangled Methods; for a Form of ſound Words may preſerve ſoundneſs in the matter of our Prayers, and prevent indecencies in the manner of them; whereas Extemporary Effuſions can do neither, for there much unſound Matter, and many unſeemly Expreſſions may and do frequently drop from thoſe that uſe them.

Moreover, many ignorant and wicked Perſons, who have been eminent for this Spiritual way of Praying, have encouraged themſelves in their Wickedneſs upon the account of this Gift, and too many ſtill flatter themſelves on the ſame account, that they are the Children of God, and endow'd with his Spirit, notwithſtanding all their Wickedneſs.

Others again, for lack of this Gift, have been apt to deſpond, as if they wanted that which ſhould chiefly recommend them unto God: And both of them have thereby grie-

vously deceived both themſelves and others.

Beſides, This pretence of greater Purity naturally leads to Schiſm and Separation; for he that offers a Purer Model, ſhall be ſure to draw Diſciples after him; and many Men being too much given to change, are apt to hearken to any higher offers and degrees of Purity; there are ſome who dream of Purity and Perfection here in this life, and theſe will eaſily liſten to any tenders and advances towards it: This will cauſe them to divide and ſeparate from others, vainly thinking themſelves advanc'd to a higher Form in Chriſt's School, and to have attain'd to greater meaſures of Perfection; which naturally leads not only to Separating, but Villifying one another; for they that take themſelves to be of a higher Claſs, will ſcorn to join or converſe with thoſe of a lower Form; and as others ſwell in their thoughts and conceits above them, ſo will they make them too the object of their contempt and ſcorn; hence we find the Presbyterians, who had declaim'd againſt the Church for making an Idol of the

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Common-Prayer, were by the Independents, and other Sectaries told, That they made a greater and worse Idol of their Covenant; and they who had stil'd the Liturgy and Episcopacy the Calves of *Dan* and *Bethel*, found after, the Directory and Presbytery branded with the same names, and they too accounted the greatest Calves that most admired them.

Thus you see to what pass declaiming against publick Order, and pretending to purer Ordinances, may bring matters to, which cannot but give great disturbance to any Church or Kingdom; whereas the Wisdom that is from above, is not only *pure, but peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, free from pride, full of good works, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*, James 3. 17, 18. If you will bring the pretences of Dissenters to this Test, 'tis to be feared *Mene Tekel* may be Written on them, *they are weigh'd in the balance, and found wanting* in all these things. I am,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER V.

SIR,

I Find you ſenſible in your laſt, of the great miſchief of ſome Mens pretences to greater Purity, and a more Spiritual way of Worſhip, and what great advantage they have given to Sectaries to multiply and increaſe their Parties. I ſhall proceed therefore to a

Fourth Artifice made uſe of to that purpoſe, and that is to cry up Peace and Unity, though their actions tend all the while to deſtroy and undermine them. They know the Holy Scriptures abound every where with Precepts and Exhortations to Peace and Unity, and what preſſing Arguments and motives are made uſe of to that end.

The Firſt things proclaim'd to the World, upon our Bleſſed Saviour's coming into it, next to the *glory of God*, were *peace on earth*, and *good will towards men*: The whole courſe of his Life and Doctrine, whilſt he continued in it, was to promote and give the higheſt In-

ſtance

ſtance and Example of them. The laſt Legacy he bequeathed to his Diſciples and Followers at his leaving the World, was *Peace*, which he will'd them above all things to keep firm and inviolable; and his laſt Prayer was, *they all might be one.* Accordingly we find the firſt Chriſtians, upon Chriſt's departure from them, were all of *one heart and one mind.* And when upon the ſpreading of the Goſpel every where, this bond of Peace and Unity began to be broken by the inſinuations of Falſe Teachers, we find the *Apoſtles* uſing all diligence to arm and caution all their Converts againſt them, willing them to endeavour to keep the *unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, to ſtand firm to the Truth of the Goſpel, and to be perfectly join'd together in the ſame Mind, and the ſame Judgment. St. *Paul* ſtrictly warned the *Corinthians* againſt falling into Parties, and following of Factions, to the prejudice of Peace and Unity; he heap'd up many Arguments in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, to keep that bond inviolate; and becauſe many falſe Teachers had crept in among the *Philippians*, he beſeeched them by all the endearments of Chriſtianity, to be *like-minded*, being of one accord and one mind. Now

Now the Diſſenters knowing how much Peace and Unity are recommended and inculcated in Holy Scripture, find it neceſſary to ſpeak up for it; hence you ſhall often hear them commending Peace, and ſeemingly very deſirous to have Love and Unity preſerved and promoted among Chriſtians; they frequently lament the lack of Love in the World, and bewail the want of thoſe due Tempers and peaceable Diſpoſitions that ſhould Unite us.

This gains them the reputation of Meek, Quiet, and Peaceable Men, and That gains them Proſelytes, who are made to believe, That to be followers of them, is to be followers of Peace. They, Good Men! (ſay ſome of their deluded Diſciples) are all for Peace, they are ſorry to find ſo much Hatred among Men; they Preach up nothing more than Peace and Love, and are always Praying for the *Peace of Jeruſalem.*

But what truth is there in all theſe fair ſpeeches and pretences? Why, little or none; For *what peace,* ſaid *Jehu, while the whoredoms of Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are ſo many?* Quid verba audiam, facta dum Videam? What heed is to be given to words, when deeds confute

ſure them? Their gathering Diſciples, and making Parties, are plain breaches of that Peace, which they ſeem to cry up; and their Schiſm and Separation a manifeſt breach of Unity; What Peace had *Zimri* who ſlew his Maſter? Do not ſome ſpeak much of Peace when they are making ready for Battel? Do not many ſeem quiet and harmleſs Creatures, whilſt 'tis not in their power to be otherwiſe, who yet are all the while hoping and waiting for advantages, and want nothing but opportunity to break out into open Hoſtilities? Theſe are not the Sons, but Enemies of Peace, who ſeek to ſupplant what they would be thought to maintain; and 'tis but a falſe trick to cry Peace, Peace, when their aims are Dominion, or Deſtruction.

But what is the Peace they thus ſpeak up for? And what is the deſign or meaning of it?

Why, 'tis an Indulgence in their Schiſm, to be let alone to draw Diſciples after them, and increaſe their Party, to be allowed to fill their Conventicles, and deceive the People without Moleſtation; this, like good peaceable Men, they will be content with at preſent, till

they

they can become ſtrong enough to get more.

So that this is a falſe Peace, and is indeed no better than a fatal ſecurity, whereby they endeavour to lull their Followers aſleep in their Schiſm; and to blind the Eyes of the World, that they may not diſcern the evil and danger of their ways.

But there is another branch of this Artifice that muſt not be omitted; and that is, their declaiming againſt differences and diviſions, when the whole courſe of their Actions tend all the while to promote them. This piece of falſhood you may eaſily diſcover by an ordinary obſervation; they know well enough that Love and Unity are neceſſarily deſtroyed by diviſions; they are aware likewiſe what advantage they give to the common Enemy, what trouble they are to all Good Men, and what ſcandal they bring upon Religion it ſelf; and therefore they muſt not be thought to have any heart or hand in cauſing Diviſions, no, they are too ſenſible of the evil, to be found the Promoters of them; they bewail the Diſtempers and Diſorders of the Times: "'Tis a ſad "thing (ſays one) that Unity, which

"is

" is ſo good and pleaſant a thing in the " Eyes of God and Man, ſhould be ſo " little regarded. 'Tis much to be la- " mented (ſaith another) that there " ſhould be ſuch diſcord and Diviſions " found among Chriſtians.

Whence then ſhould theſe Diviſions come? And who are the Authors of them? Not They to be ſure, for they, good men, are all for love and unity, though their Actions proclaim the quite contrary, and betray the falſhood of their Pretences; they are only for healing our Breaches, though they are all the while making of Parties to widen and increaſe them; they are for uniting of Proteſtants, and at the ſame time draw as many into Schiſm and Separation as they can.

But what have they to evade this guilt that lies ſo plainly at their doors? why, 'tis the Liturgy and the Ceremonies muſt bear the blame, though no Chriſtian Church was ever without the one, and no Divine Worſhip can be decently or orderly perform'd without the other. " 'Tis a ſad thing (ſaith a gifted Bro- " ther) that ſuch Bones of Contention " ſhould be thrown in the way of Chri- " ſtians; ſurely if they that compos'd

" the

" the Common-Prayer had dreamt that " it would create ſo many Diviſions, Tu- " mults and Diſtractions, they would " never have found either heart or hand " to lift up to the promoting of it. Alas poor Man! he might have ſaid as well, that the Pen-men of the Holy Scriptures would never have wrote as they did, if they had dreamt what bad uſe Hereticks and Schiſmaticks would make of it, and what perverſe Diſputes and Diviſions would be rais'd about it: 'Twas not the Compoſing, no nor yet the injoining the Common-Prayer, which is a pious and excellent model of Devotion, but ſome mens raiſing a duſt before the eyes of the People, that they may not ſee the uſefulneſs and excellency of it, that have created all theſe diſtractions and diſputes about it.

But when theſe Men are preſſed with their cauſing diviſions, beyond a poſſibility of a fair Reply, they tell us, that there muſt be Hereſies and Diviſions, that they *who are approved may be made manifeſt*, 1 Cor. 10.

But muſt not the Authors and Abettors of diviſions be made manifeſt too? Does not the ſame Apoſtle bid us to *mark them that cauſe diviſions, and avoid them?*

them? Signifying, that Hereticks and Schiſmaticks ſhould have a Brand or Mark ſet upon them, that they may be known and ſhun'd by all Chriſtians, as the Bane and peſt of any Church and Kingdom.

And now I think this Artifice is pretty well detected, and a vulgar Eye may plainly ſee the evil and danger of it; for if heaping up different Teachers be not a breach of Unity, and drawing Men from an Eſtabliſhed Church, be not cauſing Diviſions, I know not what is: Does not the Apoſtle blame the divided dialect of the *Corinthians*, when one ſaid, *I am of Paul*, *another I am of Apollo*, *and another I am of Cephas*, &c. though they proceeded not ſo far as to break Communion? And if the bare crying up different Teachers in the ſame Church, be there branded for Schiſm, How much wider muſt the breach be, when they withdraw from the Communion of it, and ſet up ſeparate Meetings, and different ways of Worſhip in Oppoſition to it?

This is plainly the caſe of our Diſſenters; and if St. *Paul* rebuk'd thoſe leſſer Schiſms and Diviſions, of preferring ſome Teachers before others with-

in the Church, as ſigns of Carnality, and degrees of Apoſtacy; how much greater muſt the fault be, to make a Schiſm from the Church, by dividing from the Worſhip and Communion of it?

Neither is the danger hereof leſs apparent than the Sin; for this hath a pernicious influence, not only on the perſons thus ſeduced from it, who are thereby rent and torn from the Body of Chriſt, and harden'd in a dangerous and deadly Schiſm; but on the whole Church, whoſe Peace and Unity is thereby broken, and being depriv'd of many of its Members, is thereby weaken'd and laid open to the Aſſaults of its greateſt Enemies.

Theſe and many more are the ſad effects of this Device, and muſt be charg'd on thoſe Craftsmen who talk much of Peace and Unity, the better to ſupplant both; and declaim againſt Diviſions, merely to promote and propagate them. I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER VI.

SIR,

I Shew'd in my laſt the Craft of Diſſenters in crying up Unity, and decrying Diviſions; and how by that means they cunningly deſtroy the one, and promote the other. I proceed now to a

Fifth Artifice of theirs to ſupport their Schiſm, and that is, Their Cenſuring the Lives and Actions of thoſe within the Church, the better to commend theirs who Diſſent from it.

And herein, again, they are the followers of the *Phariſees*, a great part of whoſe Religion conſiſted in Cenſuring the Lives, and Scorning the Perſons of other Men. Our Saviour hath obſerved of them, *Matt.* 7. 3. that they were ſharp and quick in eſpying a *mote in their brother's eye*, when they could not diſcern a *beam in their own*. They beheld the faults of others in a magnifying Glaſs, which made them aggravate all their failings, when all the while

they could ſee nothing amiſs in themſelves, and eaſily overlook'd their own Enormities.

A Learned Author hath obſerv'd of them, That they had an Eye upon every Man's Life except their own, and mightily concern'd themſelves in others Behaviour; they had a reproof for every Man's faults, great or ſmall, but were ſtill very favourable and indulgent to themſelves.

And herein they are exactly imitated, if not outdone by our Diſſenters, who delight in nothing more than Cenſuring the Lives, and Condemning the Actions of other Men; Is there any thing more obvious than this in all their Diſcourſe and Converſation? With what pleaſure do they inſiſt upon, and aggravate other Mens failings? Hurting their Neighbours Credit, ſometimes by open Calumnies, which is the Arrow that flies by day; and ſometimes by ſecret Whiſpers, which is the Peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs, and wounds without being ſeen: How freely ſhall you hear them taxing the Actions, and talking of the Miſcarriages of other Folk? How eloquent are they wont to be upon this Subject? With what heat and concern!

cern! With what ſeeming zeal and warmth does this reviling Language drop from them! Yea, Do they not place a great part of their Religion in Cenſuring the Wickedneſs of the times, crying out upon the Badneſs of Mens Lives, and ſhaking their Empty Heads at the Naughtineſs of their Ways?

Now you muſt not think that theſe bolts are ſhot at Them, or that any of the Party are to be reckoned in the number of theſe Wicked ones; no, they are thoſe Righteous Souls in *Sodom*, who are vexed with the filthy Converſation of the Wicked, and for whoſe ſake the reſt are ſpared. 'Tis the Churchmen, and they that follow the Common-Prayer, that are guilty of all theſe Enormities: We find one of them telling us in Print, "That they who "like this kind of Worſhip, are gene-"rally, Ignorant, Prophane, Superſti-"tious, Time-ſervers, Fearful, Unbe-"lievers, Haters of thoſe that are Good, "Drunkards, Adulterers, *&c.* Well ſaid, thou Accuſer of the Brethren! throw Dirt enough, and to be ſure ſome will ſtick. In another place he adds, "That they are generally Perſons much "eſtrang'd from the Life of God, and

" little acquainted with the Power of " Godlineſs. Alas, Good Man! he is griev'd at the heart to ſee the deadneſs and formality of ſuch Worſhippers. Another of theſe Godly Brethren tells us, " That the Biſhops are an Earthly " Generation, and ſavour not the " things of God; and that there is " more of God and Religion in ſome " one Congregation of a Silenc'd Mi- " niſter, than in all the Biſhops Fa- " milies in *England*. Are not theſe Charitable and Clean-mouth'd Souls? Or rather, are not their Tongues ſet on Fire of Hell?

But what is the Deſign of all theſe rude Cenſures and Calumnies? Why, to draw the * People from the Eſtabliſhed Church, and to perſuade them to come out from ſuch an unſanctified Crew; and withal to invite them to the Conventicle, where they will find better Company, and join with the Aſſembly of the Saints.

How ſerviceable this Stratagem hath been to increaſe and keep up the Party, is obvious to obſerve. For

This gratifies the natural Pride and Ambition of Mens Hearts, who are willing to be thought better than other

other Men; and are eaſily perſuaded to hearken to, and believe thoſe that tell them ſo. Again,

This gratifies the Spleen and Animoſitity that ſome have againſt their Neighbours, thus to vent their malice in Cenſures and evil Reflections on their Life and Manners; a Religion that allows and commends theſe things, muſt be very grateful to Fleſh and Blood, and cannot want many Followers. Moreover,

This cheriſhes in Men a mighty love and conceit of themſelves, making them think, that they hate and abhor thoſe ſins themſelves, which they thus Cenſure and Condemn in others.

Beſides, all Men deſire an eaſy Religion, and would willingly go to Heaven the neareſt and ſofteſt way that may be; now what can be more eaſy than to Saint themſelves by defaming others? And who would not embrace a Religion that will indulge Men in their Vices, if they do but declaim againſt them, and cenſure them in other People? Yea, 'tis a pleaſing and delightful thing to ſome Perſons to find faults in other Men, for it

gives a ſeeming ſatisfaction in their own innocence, or at leaſt gives them the reputation of their own freedom from them.

In ſhort, this declaiming againſt Vice, and lamenting the Iniquity of the times, gains them the reputation of being thought more Pious than other Men, and ſerves all thoſe ſecular ends they propound in it: Our *Saviour* tells us of the *Phariſees, that they had their reward*; that is, they gain'd the Applauſe of the world, and the Wealth of others; which were the things they aim'd at in their ſeeming Zeal; and this is ſuch a plauſible and profitable piece of Religion, that it will be ſure to have many Diſciples.

But is it any part of true Religion to Cenſure the Lives and Actions of others? Or have they that uſe to do ſo, fewer faults and more Religion than their Neighbours? No, in no wiſe. For

Firſt; This is ſo far from being any part of Religion, that 'tis none at all; yea, 'tis quite contrary to, and deſtructive of it; for Charity is the life of Chriſtianity, *and the bond*

of

of perfectneſs, without which, he that liveth is counted dead before God. Now Charity, you know, *covereth a multitude of ſins*; and is ſo far from Cenſuring, that it Excuſes, what it may, the failings of others, and rather hides than diſcloſes another's nakedneſs: He that wants this, may indeed have the ſhew and appearance, but hath nothing of the ſubſtance and reality of true Religion; for that makes us to keep at home and reform our own Lives, not ſend us abroad to pry into and condemn the Lives of others; and certainly, if we can lay no claim to Charity, we have nothing to ſhew for the truth and ſincerity of our Chriſtianity.

Again *2dly*. They that are ſo forward to Judge and Cenſure others, are commonly ſo far from being better, that they are worſe than other Men; their want of Charity ranks them among the greateſt of Sinners; we find the *Phariſees*, who were Proud, Boaſters of themſelves, and likewiſe rigid Cenſurers of others, were by our Saviour condemn'd

demn'd for the vileſt Hypocrites; *they laid heavy burdens on others, which they themſelves would not touch with the leaſt of their fingers:* And 'tis ſtill the practice of their Followers, to Commend themſelves by Diſparaging of others; and to raiſe the Trophies of their own Honour, upon the Spoils and Ruins of their Neighbours.

Yea, this practice is frequently made a Cloak, not only to cover, but to act under it the greateſt Villanies: He that deſigns to undermine, or put a Cheat upon his Neighbour, ſhall inveigh bitterly againſt the Iniquity of the times; and complain much of the Lives and Manners of other Men; and by that means ſeeks to gain the Credit of a Saint, that he may the better act the part of an Impoſtor. They that have a mind to advance themſelves, or to intrude into places of Power and Profit, ſhall inveigh againſt the Perſons, and find fault with the Actions of thoſe that are employed in them, and by this Art ſhall oft-times Prefer themſelves to

the

the Hindering or Diſpoſſeſſing of better Men.

Now this will lead us to conſider the evil and danger of this Artifice; for beſide the many and great Injuries that are hereby done to Mankind; 'tis uſurping the Throne of God, and intruding into his Tribunal. *Who made thee a Judge?* May be ask'd of all ſuch inſolent Cenſurers of other Men, who intrude into this Office without any Commiſſion. *Judge nothing before the time*, ſaith the Apoſtle; ſo that theſe Men foreſtal the Day of Judgment, and take God's work out of his Hands, who thus preſume to ſit in Judgment upon their Brethren, and pronounce Sentence in things that belong not to them; *Who art thou* (ſaith the ſame Apoſtle) *that judgeſt another man's ſervant; to his own maſter he ſtands or falleth?* So that this is a high affront and indignity offered to God thus to Arraign the Actions of our Fellow-Creatures; and without any Authority to Condemn and paſs Sentence upon his Servants.

And

And as the guilt hereof is great, ſo is the danger of it no leſs; for the Juſtice of God cannot ſuffer ſuch an inſolent invaſion of his Authority to go unpuniſhed; *Thinkeſt thou, O man, that judgeſt another, that thou ſhalt eſcape the judgment of God?* No; *they ſhall have judgment without mercy*, who ſhew no mercy; and *their damnation is juſt*, who are ſo ready upon all occaſions to Condemn their Brethren. Our Bleſſed Saviour's Advice is, *Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgement ye judge, ye ſhall be judged; and with what meaſure ye mete, ſhall be meaſured to you again: Let him that is innocent caſt the firſt ſtone*; and if we cannot juſtify our ſelves, we ſhould not be ſo forward to condemn others: *Therefore thou art inexcuſable, O man, that judgeſt; for wherein thou judgeſt another, thou condemneſt thy ſelf.*

I ſhall conclude this Artifice, with that Advice given to the *Phariſees*; *Thou Hypocrite, firſt caſt out the beam out of thy own eye, and then*

then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to caſt out the mote out of thy Brothers eye.
I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER VII.

SIR,

FInding that you have well considered the Laſt; I proceed now to a

Sixth Artifice of our Diſſenters, and that is, to ſtile the Lawful and Wiſe Injunctions of our Superiors, by the odious name of Impoſitions; a term importing more of fraud and double-dealing, than truth and juſtice in them. This comes (ſaith one) to juſtify the Impoſitions; as if it were a crime to vindicate publick Orders and Conſtitutions; and to ſpeak up for them, were to be an abetter of Fraud, and an encourager of Impoſture: If we tell them of the unreaſonableneſs of Separation, they fly upon us with the miſchief of Impoſitions; and rather than own themſelves Schiſmaticks, will make their Governors Impoſtors.

But what is the deſign of putting this ill name upon good Laws? Why, the plain deſign is to keep the People from

from complying with them, and to hinder all Conformity and Obedience to them: Should they ſuffer them to paſs under the ancient ſtile of Laws, Ordinances, or Injunctions, they might put in a juſt claim to an Obſervance of them, and the People be thereby tempted to yield due Reverence and Obedience to them; and therefore to prevent this, which would be the Ruin of their Cauſe, they muſt give them a bad name, which they know is the ready way to make them deſpis'd. Nonconformity being a breach of wholſome Orders and Eſtabliſhments, is wholly ſupported by Diſobedience to them; and therefore they muſt not be called Laws or Satutes, leſt the guilt of breaking them ſhould awaken their Conſciences, and ſtare too much in their Face; but they muſt be branded with the black Character of Impoſitions, that they may with the better colour and greater ſafety ſhake off the Obſervance of them. This will ſerve to keep the People from the Church, where they are made to believe, that they are only impos'd upon; and keep them to the Conventicle, where they are told they are more fairly and truly dealt with. And how

uſeful

uſeful this is to preſerve and propagate the Schiſm, is very eaſy to imagine.

Again; By this device the Diſſenters can ſhift of all the blame of the Diviſions from themſelves, and lay them at others doors; which is indeed a great piece of Art, and ſtands them in good ſtead; for if they are charged with the danger and evll conſequents of our unchriſtian Diviſions and Separations, they preſently throw off all the guilt of them from themſelves, and lay it upon the Impoſitions; they, good men! are in no fault, but they who have made the yoke of Conformity intolerable, by laying too much upon the backs of their weak Brethren, and making the Burthen too heavy for their tender Conſciences to bear; by this Artifice they ſeek cunningly to diſcharge themſelves of all the troubles and commotions in theſe Kingdoms, which they put not upon their own ſtubbornneſs and diſobedience to good Laws, which is the true cauſe of them; but upon their Governors for Impoſing upon them, and making the yoke of Government too heavy and hard to be born.

But

But what are thoſe Laws which they fix this odious brand upon, and call by the nick-name of Impoſitions?

Why, they are the good Orders and Conſtitutions of the Church, appointed only for the external Reverence and Decency of Divine Worſhip; 'tis the Liturgy and Diſcipline of the Church that muſt go under this infamous Character, to keep their Followers from all due Submiſſion and Obedience to them. And as the firſt Enemies of Chriſtianity arrayed the ancient Chriſtians in Bear-Skins and Goat-Skins, that they might be the more worried and baited by the Multitude; ſo have the Architects of Schiſm put this vile Title on wholeſome Orders, to make them the more hated and abhorred by the People.

Hence we read, That when King *Charles* the Firſt, out of a Pious Zeal for the Unity and Uniformity of all the Churches in his Dominions, Ordered a Liturgy to be Compoſed and Uſed in the Church of *Scotland*, which was no more than hath been practiſed in all Chriſtian Churches, and well enough became a Chriſtian Prince

to do; What loud out-cries againſt Impoſitions were raiſed by ſome Turbulent and Factious Spirits in that Kingdom? Who thereupon brake out in an unnatural War and Rebellion againſt their Lawful Sovereign; yea, and had the Impudence too to charge all that Blood upon that Pious Prince, which was wickedly ſhed by thoſe Impious Traytors. By which we plainly ſee the miſchief of this Device.

And though abundantly enough hath been written by our own and Foreign Divines, to take off this falſe Imputation, yet the cry muſt ſtill go on, to continue and propagate the Schiſm.

But what is it that makes the Burthen of Impoſitions (as they call them) ſo heavy? Why

Firſt; 'Tis the giving of Aſſent and Conſent to all that is contained in, and preſcribed by the Book of Common-Prayer. This they are continually buzzing in the Ears of the People, though they are no way concerned in it, and ſo fright them from the Communion of the Church by their feigned and imaginary Scare-crows; for this is no where required of them, and conſequently there can be no reaſon of frighting them with

with this Bug-bear, but only to keep them from the publick Worſhip. The Miniſter indeed, who is to offer up the publick Prayers of the Church, is required to give his Aſſent to them: And can any thing be more reaſonable, than that he that is called to this Office, ſhould be ſatisfied in the Soundneſs of the publick Devotion; Is it fit that any ſhould Officiate this way, who doubts of the Truth or Uſefulneſs of the publick Service? Muſt not this occaſion great Coldneſs and Hypocriſy in the Worſhip of God? If they think the ſerving of God by the Common Prayer, be a Service pleaſing unto him, Why can they not Aſſent and Conſent to it? If they do not, How can they be fit to Officiate, or indeed at any time to join in the uſe of it? So that this, if well conſidered, will be found rather a needleſs Cavil, than a juſt Exception againſt the preſcribed Worſhip. But

2dly. The Impoſing *This, and no Other*, adds to the weight of the Impoſitions, and makes the burthen too heavy.

How ſo? Is not a ſtanding Liturgy, containing all the Offices of Religion, ſufficient to all the ends of Piety and Devotion? Are not Peace, Unity, and

Order, best preserved by one Uniform Established way of Worship? Are Men imposed upon, unless they are left free to what way of Worship they please; which necessarily breeds Confusion and every Evil work? Of this our own sad Experience may abundantly satisfy us, and withal plainly shew the fallacy of this Artifice.

Now the mischief of this Device is too visible both in Church and State; for the crying out upon Impositions, and branding good Laws with that odious name, hath kept many from all Obedience to them. In short, this hath bred a contempt of Authority, and involv'd whole Kingdoms in Blood and Confusion.

But there is another branch of this Artifice, and that is, The stiling the just Penalties of wholsom Laws, by the hateful name of Persecution: This is a plain consequent of the former; for when Men think themselves imposed upon by publick Orders and Constitutions, they will soon think themselves Persecuted when they are Punished for the breach of them; hence we find the Dissenters often setting up the cry of Persecution, by which they would have

their

their Governors to be thought Tyrants, and themſelves the Saints that ſuffer under them; yea, they compare their Condition to that of the Primitive Chriſtians, and would make the World believe, that when they are Puniſhed for the breach of Unity, Peace, and Order, they are as much Perſecuted, as thoſe firſt Chriſtians in all their Sufferings for the Truth of Chriſtianity.

But this Artifice being already fully detected, I ſhall add no more here, but refer you to it. I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

YOU ſee the miſchief of calling things by wrong names, as ſtiling publick Laws by the name of Impoſitions, and the Penalties annex'd to the breach of them, by the name of Perſecution; which hath made many too careleſs of the one, and fearleſs of the other. I come now to

A Seventh Artifice of Diſſenters, and that is, to keep the People in Ignorance of the nature and danger of Schiſm, or elſe to feed them with wrong notions and conceits of it.

Indeed the *Romiſh* Prieſts are not more ſtudious to conceal the Corruptions of their Church, than theſe Men are to diſguiſe the Errors of the Conventicle.

This is evident in the matter of Schiſm; for though it be one of the greateſt Sins that can be committed, being a tearing in pieces the Body of Chriſt; and as far exceeds any other Vice,

Vice, as rending one Limb from another is worſe than a Corrupt Humour; yet the People muſt not know ſo much, the guilt of it muſt be hid from their Eyes; yea, it muſt be look'd on rather as a Duty, than a Crime; and Separation from the Communion of the Eſtabliſhed Church, muſt be a withdrawing from the Synagogue of Satan. If any Church-man ſhall preſume to ſet forth the heinouſneſs of this Sin, or make ſo bold as to charge Diſſenters with it, they are taught to call it Railing; and inſtead of reforming the Evil in their own Perſons, muſt agree together to run down the Preacher; this is too well known in experience to need any proof; for none ever reproved this Sin in them, but they ſaid he Railed; and though it be Zeal and Duty in them to inveigh againſt the Faults of others, yet 'tis Malignity of Spirit, and hatred of the Power of Godlineſs, to lay open their Miſcarriages.

But are theſe Men all this while free from the guilt of this Sin, which they are ſo unwilling to hear of?

No, notoriouſly guilty of it; for a cauſeleſs Separation from a true Church, is by the Confeſſion of their own Teach-

ers, acknowledged to be the Sin of Schiſm, as they often declared in their Arguings againſt the *Browniſts* of old, and the Sectaries of later Days. Now the Wiſeſt of them generally own the Church of *England* to be a True Church, and none of them with all their skill have ever ſhewed any juſt cauſe for Separation from it; and therefore breaking from the Worſhip and Communion of it, cannot poſſibly be excuſed from Schiſm.

How then comes it to paſs, that their Teachers conceal this from them, and not only ſuffer this guilt to lie upon them, but lead and encourage them too in that evil, which themſelves condemned in others?

Why, the plain Reaſon is to preſerve and uphold the Party; for ſhould the People once know the nature and danger of Schiſm, and be ſenſible how guilty they are of it, the Diſſenting Cauſe would fall to the ground, and the whole buſineſs of the Conventicle be ſoon at an end; and therefore to prevent that, the People muſt be kept in ignorance of their Duty, leſt they ſhould return to it; and not be permitted to know the evil of Separation, leſt

they

they ſhould turn from it. So that Ignorance too is the Mother of theſe Mens Devotion; and they who ſpeak ſo much of their great Light, are merely led on and kept in Darkneſs.

But by what Arts do theſe Men thus hoodwink and blind the Eyes of the People? Why,

To hinder them from the knowledge of Schiſm, they keep them as much as poſſible from hearing any Diſcourſes of it; they permit them not to Read thoſe Books that would diſcover to them the Evil of it: If they hear of any Book written to that purpoſe, or find it put into the hands of any of their Followers, they caution them againſt it as a dangerous Piece, and tending to ſubvert the Power of Godlineſs. Thus do they keep their Followers in Ignorance by the ſame methods the *Romiſh* Prieſts do theirs.

If any of their Teachers publiſh any thing, though never ſo mean, to hide the Schiſm, and harden their Followers in it, they ſend it about in Triumph, Poſting it up like Quacks Bills in Market-places, and other places of reſort; thereby ſpreading it among the deluded

Vul-

Vulgar, who are apt to magnify the Performance, to leſſen the Sin.

But if notwithſtanding their endeavours, the Eyes of any begin to open, and they come to ſee the Error of their ways, great care is taken to put out that Light, and to ſtifle ſuch Convictions: If by any means they ſmell out the danger of Schiſm, they make them believe it to be only a Theological Scare-Crow, whereby Men in Power would enforce their own Dictates. But is breaking the Peace and Unity of the Church a mere Scare-Crow? Is the dividing of Chriſt himſelf, and rending in ſunder the Communion of Saints, which is the nature of Schiſm, only a Bugbear to fright Fools and Children? Certainly they can be no living Members of Chriſt's Body, who are ſo inſenſible of theſe Convulſions.

But they tell them farther, That the Papiſts charge us with the ſame guilt, and brand us as much for Schiſmaticks as we do them. But

Is there the ſame reaſon? Have not the Terms of their Communion been plainly proved to be Sinful, and ſuch as we cannot ſafely join in? And hath this been ever proved of ours? Nay, Do

not

not themſelves own the contrary by their Occaſional Communion with us? And, I hope, there is ſome difference between a voluntary departing from the Church, and being driven from it.

But to keep them in their Schiſm, they add, That the Terms of Communion ſhould be only Scriptural and Unexceptionable; whereas Ours are Doubtful, and ſuch againſt which many have great Scruples and Exceptions.

But is there any thing, how wiſely ſoever ordered, againſt which weak and wilful Perſons may not entertain ſome Scruples? May not cunning and deſigning Men raiſe a miſt before the Eyes of the People, and keep them from diſcerning the cleareſt Truths? And muſt ſuch artificial Doubts juſtle out a plain and neceſſary Duty? I hope the Wiſdom of Superiors may direct and overrule in caſe of doubts, and their Authority may carry weight enough to weigh down ſuch ſcruples.

When they are beaten out of theſe ſubterfuges, they tell the People, That

Schiſm

Schiſm is a falling off from the Communion of the Catholick Church, not of This, or That particular Church; ſo that they may continue Members of Chriſt's Church in general, though they divide from the National or Pariſh-Church where they live.

But is there any Communicating with the Catholick Church, without being in Communion with ſome particular Church? Can a Member belong to the Body, that is not joined to any part of it? No more can any be a Member of Chriſt's Body, that is divided from that part of it where he lives: So that if the Church of *England* be a ſound part of the Catholick Church, as is generally owned by all ſober Diſſenters, we cannot divide from it, without dividing from the Whole, and Separating from the Catholick Church of Chriſt.

But farther, to palliate and propagate their Schiſm, they tell them, That 'tis no unjuſt Separation, till it proceed ſo far as to deny the Faith; and whilſt they keep the Chriſtian Faith, they cannot juſtly be charged with Schiſm.

But

But is there no difference between Apoſtacy and Schiſm? Is it not one thing to deny the Faith, and another to forſake the Communion of the Church? May not ſome be pretty ſound, and tenacious too, of the Chriſtian Faith, and ſo be neither Hereticks nor Apoſtates, who yet may Separate from the Worſhip and Communion of the Church, and ſo be juſtly branded for Schiſmaticks? Do not all the ancient Fathers in their diſputes with the Hereticks, carefully diſtinguiſh between theſe Two? May we not ſee ſome breaking the Unity and Communion of the Church, who yet do not renounce their Creed, or deny the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith? The confounding theſe Two, hath not only confounded their Notions, but brought great Confuſion into the Church.

And yet at other times they would perſuade them, That Schiſm is only a breach of Love and Charity within the Church, and ſignifies no more than Diviſions and Contentions among the Members of the ſame Church, in crying up different Teachers, as it happened in the Church of *Corinth*, when

when one ſaid, *I am of Paul, another I am of Apollo*, &c. and this, ſay they, begot thoſe Sidings and Factions, which the Apoſtle there calls and reproves by the name of Schiſms.

Well; But if thoſe leſſer differences and ſidings among the Members of the ſame Church, be by the Apoſtle ſtiled Schiſms, and condemn'd as occaſions of great Heats and Animoſities, How much more muſt thoſe greater variances of breaking Communion, and ſetting up Separate Meetings and ways of Worſhip againſt each other, be condemn'd for ſuch? And how naturally theſe things tend to deſtroy Love and Charity, is too plain by thoſe flames of Contention which theſe ſparks have already kindled.

But there is one thing more by which they miſlead unwary People in this matter, that muſt not be paſſed by, and that is, their making them believe, That an Act of Parliament by granting a Toleration hath taken off the Schiſm, and removed the guilt of it; for we find the Ringleader of the Party venting this wild

Noti-

Notion, *viz.* "If the Supreme Au- Baxter's
"thority looſen our Obligation to the
"Pariſh Meeting, the Iniquity upon *p.* 32.
"this account is not to be found,
"and the Schiſm is gone; lo here!
"ſaith he, a way opened for the
"Parliament (if they pleaſe) to rid
"both the trouble and ſcruple of
"Schiſm out of the Land.

But can they rid the Sin and Guilt of it too out of the Land? If not, 'tis fit the ſcruple and trouble of it too ſhould remain to keep Men from it; the Peace and Unity of the Church is given in ſtrict Charge by Chriſt and his Apoſtles to all the Members of it; And is any Earthly Power able to looſen this Obligation? Can Human Laws vacate the Authority and Obligation of Divine Laws? If ſo, we might invert the Apoſtle's Queſtion, and ſay, 'tis fitter to Obey men than God. The Parliament indeed may take off the Temporal Penalties, which themſelves have annex'd to the Sin of Schiſm; but the Guilt and Obligation to Eternal Puniſhment, can be taken off by none but God only, who hath laid it upon it.

And

And yet there is one way by which the Parliament may rid this evil out of the Land, and that is, by Removing Schismatical Teachers, and Suppressing Seditious Conventicles: And that way the Iniquity of it may not be found, and the Schism may be gone. I am,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER IX.

SIR,

I Shewed in my laſt, the Diſſenters artificial concealing the nature and guilt of Schiſm, and their feeding the People with falſe notions of it, to continue and increaſe their Party. I proceed now to

Another Artifice to this end, and that is, their miſtaking or miſinterpreting ſundry paſſages of Holy Scripture, whereby they wreſt it from the true ſenſe, and draw it in to ſerve their own purpoſe.

And herein again they are the Followers of the *Phariſees*, who by their falſe Gloſſes, and perverſe Interpretations, made void the Law of God. Of this many Inſtances may be given; and that you may be the better ſatisfied of this Device, I ſhall ſingle out a few.

And the Firſt I ſhall mention of theſe, ſhall be that of *Deut.* 4. 2. *Ye ſhall not add unto the word which I command you, neither ſhall ye diminiſh ought*

from it; that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.

From this Scripture they infer, That the Church of *England* hath made ſeveral Additions to the Word of God, and ſo turn the fault of the Schiſm upon her, by clogging its Communion with ſuch uncommanded Conditions. Now the plain ſenſe of thoſe Words is this, "Ye ſhall not Tranſgreſs the "Commandments of God, by doing "any thing contrary to them, which "is to add to them; or by omitting any "thing required by them, which is to "diminiſh from them. Now let the Wiſeſt of them ſhew any one thing Appointed by the Church, that is forbidden by the Word of God, or Omitting any thing required by it, and then we ſhall own the Charge; but if they cannot do this, which had been done long ſince, if it could have been done at all, they muſt excuſe us if we take them not only for falſe Expoſitors of the Holy Scriptures, but falſe Accuſers of the Holy Church.

The Additions there forbidden, are to the ſubſtance of God's Word, by making other and more Precepts and

Pro-

Prohibitions than that hath made, and adding new ſubſtantial parts of Divine Worſhip; but cannot with any congruity of ſenſe be extended to the Circumſtantials of it, as Time, Place, Habit, Geſture, and the like; which though not particularly determined in Holy Scripture, are yet neceſſarily implied in the general Rules of Order, Decency, and Edification required in it.

And yet theſe Men will never leave asking that Queſtion, *Who hath required theſe things at your hands?* Though the nature of the Thing, the general Rules of God's Word, and the Power ſet up by Chriſt in his Church, to which we owe Obedience, have expreſly required theſe things from us. Iſa. 1. 13.

Yea, theſe rare Expoſitors have unwittingly fallen into that very Evil themſelves, which they condemn in others, by making more things Unlawful, than God's Word hath made ſo; and Forbidding many things which are no where Forbidden by it; which is a plain Addition to the Subſtance of Religion.

But thoſe words of *Jeremy* (ſay theſe Men), *They built the high places of Tophet, to burn their ſons and their daugh-* Jer. 7. 31. 19. 5.

hers in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart; lay the ſtreſs of the Provocation, not upon doing what God had Forbidden, but in doing what he had not Commanded them.

But how often muſt theſe Men be told, and by ſome of their own Party too, that the meaning of thoſe words, *which I commanded them not*, is the ſame with what *I had forbidden them*; for ſo the thing there referred to expreſly was, *their offering their children unto Molech*? Yea, that Phraſe, *which I commanded them not*, is in the *Old Teſtament* generally applied to what God had Forbidden: *They offered ſtrange fire which the Lord commanded not*, Levit. 10. 1. that is, which he had forbidden them: *They worſhipped other Gods which I have not commanded*, i. e. which I have forbidden.

So that to make it neceſſary to have an expreſs Command for every Circumſtance of Divine Worſhip, and to charge the doing any thing in it, without ſuch a Command, for an Addition to God's Word, is it ſelf a plain Addition to it, where no ſuch thing is either mentioned or required: Yea, the miſtake

ſtake hereof hath been ſo frequently and ſo fully laid open, that they muſt be paſt all ſhame that have the face to mention it any more.

Another Text perverted by theſe Artiſts, is that of *Joſhua* 7. 13. where *Joſhua* is commanded to Sanctify the People, becauſe there was an Accurſed thing among them, which muſt be taken away before *Iſrael* could have Peace, or ſtand before their Enemies.

Now this Accurſed thing, was *a goodly Babyloniſh garment, two hundred ſhekels of ſilver, and a wedge of gold of fifty ſhekels; which Achan had ſtole and hid in the earth in the midſt of his tent*, ver. 21. which being done contrary to the Covenant and Command of God, he troubled *Iſrael*, who could find no reſt, till *Joſhua*, by God's Command, deſtroyed this Accurſed thing, and Burnt *Achan* who had purloined it.

But what uſe do theſe Expoſitors make of this Scripture? Why, a goodly one indeed; the *accurſed thing*, muſt be the Common-Prayer; the *Babyloniſh Garment*, the Surplice; the *wedge of gold*, the Croſs, and other Ceremonies; the *ſhekels of ſilver*, the Conſecrated Veſſels of the Temple; and theſe being

ſet up as ſo many Idols in the Temple, muſt be all removed before there can be any Peace in *Iſrael*. Is not this a rare Expoſition? May not a pregnant Fancy Interpret all theſe in a diffrent ſenſe, calling the Covenant, the *accurſed thing*, which would give Three Nations no Peace till it was removed; May not the *Babyloniſh garment*, be the long Cloak, which hath been made a Covering for much Rapine, Oppreſſion, and Diſſimulation? May not the *wedge of gold*, be the great Idol of Presbytery? And the *ſilver ſhekels*, the Silver Trumpets that ſounded the Alarm to War, and after cried up the great *Diana of the Epheſians*? All which being ſet up as the *abomination of deſolation in the holy place*, muſt be deſtroyed before the Nation can be reſtored to Peace and Tranquility. If they do not like this Expoſition, let them take heed how they offer at the like, ſince you ſee an ordinary Wit may wreſt ſuch paſſages to any purpoſe.

I ſhall mention but one Text more at preſent, that hath been abuſed by theſe Interpreters, and that is, that of St. *Paul* in the 1 *Cor.* 10. 32. *Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor*

to the Church of God. In which words the Apoſtle exhorted the firſt Chriſtians to walk ſo warily and inoffenſively, as not to hinder the Converſion of any, that neither *Jew* nor *Gentile* might be kept off from embracing Chriſtianity, or harden'd in their enmity and oppoſition againſt it; and the plain ſenſe and uſe we are to make of it, is to beware that we do not lay any ſtumbling-block in the way of Chriſtians, or be unto them an occaſion of falling.

But what ſenſe do theſe Learned Interpreters put upon theſe Words? Why, they take Offence there mentioned by the Apoſtle, not for an occaſion of Sin, but for any thing that diſcontents or diſpleaſes; and ſo would have Superiors take heed of enjoining any thing that may grieve or diſpleaſe the Godly Party, meaning themſelves; and indeed they are ſo tender, that a ſmall matter will grieve them; yea, if they have not their way, like froward Children, 'twill be hard ſometimes to keep them quiet; and ſo would have, not the Wiſdom of Superiors, but their own

Fancies and Humours, the measure of Government. An admirable Exposition to serve their purpose! and a singular Device to please and propagate the Party; which is too well known to be farther insisted upon by

Yours,

A. B.

LETTER X.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Diſſenters to uphold their Schiſm, is to promote the Intereſt of the Party, and to confine the offices of Kindneſs and Charity to thoſe of their own Sect. This was likewiſe the way of the *Phariſees*, of whom our Saviour obſerv'd, *Mat.* 5. 46, 47. *That they would only ſalute their own brethren, and do good to none but ſuch as did good to them*; meaning, that they made thoſe of their own Sect the ſole objects of their Courteſy and Beneficence. We read of the *Samaritans*, that they would ſcarce ſhew the way to a *Jew*, or perform the common offices of Humanity and Hoſpitality, but to thoſe of their own Party; and therefore we find, that when our Saviour was paſſing through a Village of the *Samaritans*, they denied him and his Diſciples all Entertainment, *becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem*, Luke 9. 52, 53.

A Learn-

Dr *Cave.* A Learned Divine hath observed of the *Donatists* of Old, That they confined all acts of Benevolence and Civility to those of their Sect; and upheld their Separation from the Catholick Church, by the Artifice of Trade; for they would employ none to Till their ground, or to be their Stewards, but such as espoused their Opinion; and so kept up their Party, merely by Trading within themselves.

And hath not this Device been made use of to the same purpose in our Days? Hath not Interest and Trade had a great hand in our Divisions? Have not some, on whom others depend for their Work and Subsistence, employed none but those of their own Faction? And have not many of the meaner sort been tempted to Separate Meetings, merely to find encouragement from them? May we not see their great diligence in promoting those of the Party to Places of Trust and Profit; yea, in making Matches too, which they generally do within the Tribe, not only to keep up the Old Stock, but to breed a new Race of Dissenters? These things are too common and notorious to need any proof.

Now

Now how ſerviceable this Stratagem is to ſupport and increaſe the Party, is eaſy to conceive; for Intereſt being the great Wheel that puts the World in motion, that which beſt promotes and ſets that a going, ſhall be ſure to have many Followers: We read of ſome that followed our Saviour *for the loaves*, John 6. 26, 66. and when they failed, *walked no more with him*; and there are many ſtill, that eſpouſe a Party to get Bread; and enter into a ſeemingly Religious Company, the better to carry on and advance their Trade. We are told of ſome, *whoſe gain is their greateſt godlineſs*; and though *no man can ſerve God and Mammon*, yet theſe will be ſerving of *Mammon*, even when they appear the moſt Zealous Servants of God. Their Teachers too are buſy to promote the Intereſt of their Followers, the better to promote their own; and labour hard to advance their Trade, that they may have the richer Prize, and make the better Merchandize of them. The Apoſtle makes mention of ſome *unruly, vain talkers and deceivers, who ſubvert whole houſes, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucres ſake*, Tit. 1. 10, 11. and of thoſe he declares, that

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whatever pretences they may make, *they ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly*, Rom. 16. 17. *The love of money*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. *is the root of all evil*; and eſpecially of the evils of Error and Diviſions; *for while ſome have coveted it* (ſaith he) *they have erred from the faith.* This hath made ſome forward to vent, and others as ready to receive and be carried about with *ſtrong deluſions*; and you need not doubt, but many will be ſtill Coining New Doctrines for their Diſciples, whilſt they can thereby Coin or Procure New Money for themſelves.

So that conſidering what a mighty influence worldly Intereſt hath upon the Minds of Men, 'tis no wonder that Seducers fiſh for Proſelytes with this Bait, and that ſo many are caught and led away by it.

But does Chriſtianity allow the reſtraining our Charity to a Party? No; ſo far from it, that it extends it to all Men; yea, to our very Enemies; for our Bleſſed Saviour hath bid us, *Matt.* 5. 44. *to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe and perſecute us*; this is to ſhew our ſelves *children of our Father*

which

which is in heaven; who causeth the Sun to shine upon all men, and sendeth rain promiscuously on the good and bad, ver. 45. 'Tis a narrow and contracted Charity that is confined to a Sect, which our Saviour sharply rebuked in the *Pharisees*; *If ye love them* (saith he) *that love you, what reward have you? do not even the Publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not the very Publicans so?* ver. 46, 47. This is a sort of Mercenary and Huckstering Love, that is to be found in the worst of Men, who place their Benefits there, where they may have them again with greater advantage; and serve a Party, only to serve their own Honour and Interest; which is not to love our Neighbour but our selves; and therefore Christ wills us *to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect*; meaning, that we should extend our Kindnesses, as God doth his Blessings, upon all Mankind, and avoid distinctions in the common Offices of Humanity and Charity.

Indeed, herein mainly consists the evil of this Artifice, that it naturally tends to destroy Love, and to nourish Faction; for the contracting these acts

and

and offices of Kindneſs to a Party, contracts the Heart and Affections too, and ſhuts out others from any ſhare in it, for none will admit them into their Hearts, who find themſelves excluded from theirs; mutual Converſation and Kindneſs beget an univerſal Love and Good-will to Mankind; but reſtraining them within the limits of a Sect, reſtrains the Bowels too, and may beget indeed a Love to ſome, but breeds a Hatred and Averſation from many more. This is too evident in Towns, Countries, and Families, to need any proof; for Experience (which is the plaineſt Argument) ſhews us how differences in Religion ſowre the Minds, and alienate the Affections from one another. Mens withdrawing in their Commerce, is ſoon followed with a withdrawing in their Communion; and they that cannot meet together in God's Houſe, can ſeldom meet together in their own. So that confining the offices of Commerce and Charity to a Party, naturally deſtroys the Love that is due to Mankind, and ſerves only to cheriſh a Faction. Yea,

It tends to promote Hypocriſy as well as Diviſion, for many needy Perſons by this means eſpouſe a Sect, not to ſerve God,

God, but the better to help themſelves, and become Proſelytes, that they may become Favourites of the Party. Thus do they make their Religion truckle to their worldly Intereſt; and under a colour of ſerving God, are all the while ſerving of *Mammon*; which is a mocking of God, and one of the vileſt pieces of Hypocriſy.

The *Presbyterians* highly blam'd this of old, and proved *Independency* a Faction, by their making uſe of this Stratagem, for they drew many Proud, Ambitious, and Covetous Perſons into their Sect, by the hopes of Offices and other places of Profit and Truſt; they made many Proſelytes of needy, decayed, and broken Tradeſmen, by helping them to live, and putting them in a way to get ſomething; they increaſed their Party by befriending only ſuch as turn'd to them: This they condemn'd in the *Independents*, as the way to make Men Hypocrites, and ſhewed them to act not by any Principles of Duty and Conſcience, but by the wheels of Intereſt and Ambition. And may we not ſee them daily playing the ſame Game? Do not the Sectaries increaſe and ſtrengthen their Parties, by promoting the

the Trade, procuring of Matches, and many other ways of befriending such as come over to them?

I know you cannot be so great a stranger to the ways of those Men, as to be ignorant of these things. I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER XI.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Diſſenters to ſupport their Schiſm, is their working upon the Weakneſs, the Wilfulneſs, and the Diſcontents of the People to ſerve their own ends upon them. This Artifice hath Three Branches, which muſt be particularly laid open.

The *Firſt* is, their working upon the Weakneſs of the People, and making uſe of their Ignorance to betray them: There are many among the Vulgar, who for want of being train'd up betimes in the way that they ſhould go, have gone aſtray ever after; and being never well ſetled in the Principles of Religion, have been fickle and unſtable in all their ways: Such as theſe lie open to the craft and ſubtilty of Seducers, and are eaſily Perverted by them. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that there are many well-

meaning Perſons, who walk on in the ways of ſeparation in the ſimplicity of their Hearts, that were firſt miſled into them through the ſimplicity of their Heads; for ſo St. *Paul* obſerves of ſome, *That by good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple*, Rom. 15. 18. Such Men for lack of timely Inſtruction, remain Children in Underſtanding, and like them too, are toſs'd to and fro from Sect to Sect, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine.

Now 'tis ſuch as theſe that Diſſenters work moſt upon, taking advantage of their blind Zeal to miſ-lead and impoſe upon them; hence you may obſerve their Followers to conſiſt chiefly of the Weaker Sex; who being led more by Fancy than Judgment, are the eaſieſt to be drawn into the ſnare, and the hardeſt to be recovered out of it. A melting Tone, a whining Voice, affected Phraſes, vehement Geſtures, and the like, have impoſed upon the Weakneſs of many, who have taken ſuch falſe Fire for true Zeal, and thought That to be Religion, which is nothing elſe but Phrenzy or Deſign.

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Now the Evil of this Artifice muſt be obvious to any, that will obſerve the dangerous Errors, and monſtrous Opinions, that many have been drawn into by this ſlight of Men, and cunning Craftineſs, whereby they lay in wait to Deceive; for theſe Men have ſtrangely impoſed upon the credulity of the Vulgar, and drawn them not only into bad Opinions, but the vileſt Practices; and made Treaſon, Murther, Oppreſſion, and other groſs Enormities, to appear abroad under the colours of Religion.

Such as theſe make their Markets of what is no way vendible, even the Infirmities of their Brethren; and inſtead of pitying and aſſiſting their Weakneſs, work upon it to their Deſtruction; when they ſhould be Eyes to the Blind, they lead them out of the way, and carry them into Boggs and Ditches! Which ſhould make the common People more aware of theſe Crafts-men, and take heed how they truſt themſelves in ſuch hands.

2dly. Another branch of this Artifice, is to work upon the Wilfulneſs of the People, and to make uſe of their Headineſs, as well as Ignorance,

to confirm them in their Schiſm. If you obſerve it, there are many among the Vulgar, who though weak and ignorant enough, God knows, are yet very wilful and obſtinate; they are too wiſe to learn, and too ſtiff to ſtoop to the Wiſdom of their Betters. Such as theſe the Diſſenters work upon, knowing if they can but get them into their Sect, they have them faſt enough; their own Pride and Obſtinacy will hinder their return, and harden them againſt all Conviction; hence the Leaders of the Schiſm are buſy to infuſe Prejudices into them againſt the Eſtabliſhed Worſhip and Diſcipline, and to inſtil wrong Notions of both, knowing if they are once entertained, they are fixed there, and 'twill be hard to remove them; and therefore they endeavour to heat the Heads of ſuch Perſons with a falſe Zeal, and that will harden their Hearts, and ſeal up their Ears againſt Inſtruction. If theſe Artiſts can but draw the Vulgar into an admiration of their Perſons or Parts, they then attain their ends, and can lead them where they pleaſe; their Errors then ſhall paſs for Oracles; whatever drops

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from them muſt be as true as the Goſpel, and all their Dictates as uncontroulable as thoſe of the Infallible Chair.

Now the miſchief hereof is too open and viſible to need any diſcovery; for *Pertinacia nullum dedit remedium Deus:* Obſtinacy is a Diſeaſe of the Mind, for which there is no Cure; for it rejects the uſe of all good means, and renders the caſe of ſuch as fall into it, deſperate and remedileſs; he that is obſtinately addicted to an Error, wilfully ſhuts his Eyes againſt the Light, and ſuch a one muſt neceſſarily walk on in darkneſs, till he fall into the deep Abyſs of black and eternal Darkneſs; which ſhould teach all Men to beware of ſuch Leaders, as thus darken the Minds, and harden the Hearts of their Followers, and by both lead them on to the gulph of Deſtruction. This will be the fate of ſuch as receive not the Truth in the love of it, but are led on to believe a lie, and carried away with ſtrong deluſions. But there is,

3dly, Another branch of this Artifice, and that is, Their working upon

the Diſcontents of People to draw them into the Schiſm. There are too many in the World, of ſuch peeviſh and perverſe Tempers, that they take pet upon any ſlight occaſion, and like Tinder, catch fire at every ſpark. One Man has not the Honour he would have; another hath miſſed ſuch a Place or Preferment he expected; a third hath received ſome Injury or Affront from his Neighbour; and all theſe are put out of Humour, and grown Diſcontented; one Man's greatneſs is an Eyeſore to another; ſome body or other hath anger'd ſuch a Cholerick Man, and he muſt be reveng'd. But the miſery is, they all ſeek their revenge upon the Government; if any thing hath diſguſted them in the publick Adminiſtration of Affairs, they preſently make it an occaſion of Separation; and whatever happens amiſs in the State, makes them quarrel and fall out with the Church.

Now theſe Waſpiſh and Cholerick Perſons, of which the World affords but too many, are another ſort of Men which our Diſſenters mainly work on, lending an Ear to their Com-

Complaints, and improving their Diſcontents into Separation, they flatter them in the Juſtice of what they complain of, ſaying, What pity it is that ſuch Good Men ſhould not be employed in the Government! and cry ſhame, that ſuch Worthy Perſons ſhould be neglected; and when by this means they have inclined and prepared them for the Faction, they declare their readineſs to embrace them, and at their coming, with open arms receive them into it. Thus is their Religion owing to the Ill Nature of the one, and the Subtilty of the other, and the Profeſſion of it, in both, made uſe of to Countenance what it plainly forbids.

Now how ſerviceable this Stratagem is to increaſe the Party, is eaſy to obſerve; for hereby great Numbers are drawn and invited into the Schiſm; and all ignorant, wilful, and diſcontented Perſons, run into the Faction, as into a Common Sewer; if any become a Malecontent, or Diſaffected in the State, he ſhall ſoon be encouraged to be ſo in the Church, and his Religion ſhall receive a tincture from the bitterneſs of his Spleen: If any

hath Falſified in his Tythes, or been Sued for them, he leaves his Miniſter, and away to the Separate Meeting, where he is entertained with the pleaſing Ditty, *Why ſhould the Parſon have One in Ten?* And if he will not depend upon the Good-will and Contributions of the Hearers, 'tis pity he ſhould have any thing: If a Woman hath proved Unfaithful or Undutiful to her Husband, and thereby occaſioned any juſt Offence in the Family, away ſhe goes to the Conventicle, where ſhe is received as a Saint, and the blame laid upon the innocent Husband at home.

In a word; If any for their Ill Behaviour in the Church, be juſtly Excommunicated, or turn'd out of it, they preſently betake themſelves to the Conventicle, where they who were rejected as great Sinners in the one, are received as great Saints in the other. Thus is the Conventicle the Sink of the Church, where the Refuſe and Off-ſcouring of the one, runs and empties it ſelf into the other.

Now is not this a vile and dangerous Stratagem, that leaves ſuch an outlet and encouragement to all manner

ner of Vice? Muſt not this take away all the terror of Diſcipline and Church-Cenſures, to have ſuch an eaſy way to be rid of the fear and trouble of both? What check or reſtraint can be put upon Immorality and Vice, when there is ſuch an artificial method of evading the ſhame and puniſhment of them?

This is a matter well worthy of the Conſideration of Superiors, to ſtop this outlet of Impiety, and to ſhut the door that opens to ſo much Atheiſm and Confuſion. I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER XII.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Diſſenters to uphold their Schiſm, is a pretence to Chriſtian Liberty: And herein they tread exactly in the very ſteps of the Papiſts, who call for Liberty, though themſelves will give none; yea, they herein not only follow the ſteps, but act the part, and promote the very deſigns of the Papiſts; For did not the *Roman* Catholicks ſtruggle hard for this Liberty, merely to bring about their own ends? And is it not well known how the Diſſenters joined with them, in their endeavours of taking off the Penal Laws and Teſt, which would have undermined the Reformation, and Eſtabliſhed Popery?

But what is that Chriſtian Liberty theſe Men pretend to, and call ſo loudly for? Why, 'tis a freedom from the Obſervation of all Laws about Indifferent

different things in the Worſhip of God; or their not being tied up to any other Rules in theſe things, but ſuch as they in their great Wiſdom ſhall think fit; hence they perſuade the People, that to preſcribe any thing in the Worſhip of God, which he himſelf hath not Commanded, is an invaſion of his Prerogative, and an infringement of Chriſtian Liberty: But hath God any where preſcribed the particular Times, Places, Habits, Geſtures, and other Circumſtances of Divine Worſhip? Hath he given any other than ſome general Rules for the more Decent and Orderly performance hereof? No, 'tis certain he hath not; why, then the particular determination of theſe Circumſtances, wherein this Decency and Order conſiſts, muſt be left to that Power which Chriſt hath ſet up in his Church: For to leave every one to his own Liberty in theſe things, is a Principle of Confuſion, and muſt bring all manner of Indecency and Diſorder into the Service of God.

How then comes this to be called Chriſtian Liberty? Hath Chriſt any where Commanded or Allowed any

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ſuch Liberty in his Church, or exempted Chriſtians from Obedience to Authority in ſuch Lawful and Indifferent things? No; he hath given both his Precept and Example to the contrary; for he was not only Obedient to the *Roman* Power in all Lawful things, but paid all due Reverence and Obedience to the Authority of the *Jewiſh* Church; he ſtrictly obſerved the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* Service, as well thoſe of Human as Divine Appointment; he kept to the Geſture uſed in Eating the Paſſeover, *Matt.* 26. 20. and punctually Conformed to all the Ceremonies of the Synagogue-Worſhip.

So that 'tis prevaricating with God, as well as deceiving the People, to tell them, That Chriſt hath diſpenſed with all Laws made for the external Order and Decency of Publick Worſhip, and given them a Liberty to behave themſelves in it as they pleaſe.

But does not the Apoſtle tell us, *of a liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free*; willing us *to ſtand faſt in it, and not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage?* Gal. 5. 1. Yes; but that was a Liberty from the numerous

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and burthenſome Rites and Ceremonies of *Moſes*'s Law; which for the number and uneaſineſs of them, are by St. *Peter* juſtly ſtiled a Yoke, and ſuch a one too, *as neither they, nor their forefathers were able to bear*, Acts 15. 10. for their Temples daily flow'd with the Blood of their Flocks and Herds; their Altars ſmoak'd with the moſt coſtly Incenſe and Perfumes; in a word, they were preſcribed to, almoſt in all the punctilio's of Human Life, and few or no things were left indifferent to them.

Now theſe things being for the moſt part Typical, and only *ſhadows of good things to come*, were all to be done away when the Subſtance came; accordingly at Chriſt's coming all theſe Shadows vaniſhed like darkneſs at the approach of the Sun, and the cloudy Types of the Law were diſpelled by the brightneſs of his Coming.

Now a freedom from thoſe cumberſome Rites and Ceremonies of the Old Law, is the Liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free; and to return to the Obſervance of them, is to be entangled again in the yoke of Bondage.

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But what is this to Governors applying the general Rules of Scripture about the Order and Decency of God's Worſhip to particular Laws about it? Here the Ceremonies enjoined are not Typical, as the *Jewiſh* were; nor is the obſerving of them a virtual denying that Chriſt is come in the Fleſh, as the continuance of the *Jewiſh* Rites would be; but are Appointed only for the more comely Worſhipping of *God manifeſt in the fleſh*, and the more ſolemn Praiſing of God the Father for that ineſtimable Bleſſing.

To obſerve ſuch wholſome Orders made for this end, is ſo far from infringing our Chriſtian Liberty, that it would be a great infringement of it to do otherwiſe. For,

Firſt; This would infringe the Liberty that Chriſt hath left with Governors, of Ordering ſuch Indifferent things; this is the main, if not the only Branch of their Eccleſiaſtical Power; for the Subſtantials of Divine Worſhip are already Appointed by Chriſt, and the Spirit of God hath left ſome general Rules for the more orderly performance of it; but the par-

particular Rules of Order and Decency being no where Prescribed, these are left to the determination of our Governors, whom we are required to *obey for the Lord's sake*; and to deny them this, is to divest them of all Power in Church-matters; yea, this will leave a less Liberty to Ecclesiastical Governors under the Gospel, than the Governors of the *Jewish* Church were invested with; who yet were bound up and determined in far more particulars than ours now are.

Again; To take off our Obedience in these Indifferent things, is to infringe the Liberty of the People, who must be thereby deprived of a better way of serving God, and likewise subject them to the Punishment and Displeasure of the Magistrate for Disobeying him in things that are within his Power to Command.

But wherein then lies our Christian Liberty, if Governors may Impose what they think fit upon us?

Why, the Governors Liberty consists in this, That they are not tied up to any particular Modes or Circumstances of Divine Worship, but may establish in Indifferent things, what they

they judge moſt expedient for Order and Comelineſs.

The Peoples Liberty lies in this; That they do not look upon or uſe the things contained in ſuch Injunctions, as eſſential parts of Divine Worſhip, or matters neceſſary to Salvation; but merely for Diſcipline and and Orders ſake; they retain ſtill the Liberty of the Judgment about the nature of the things, though the uſe of them be for wiſe and publick Reaſons reſtrain'd.

Whereas ſuch a Liberty as ſets Men free from all Laws and good Orders of this kind, is a wild and extravagant fancy, and lets them looſe to all Diſorder; this is to uſe our Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciouſneſs, and to make it a Pretence or Covering for all Licentiouſneſs.

But what is the deſign of this falſe pretence to Chriſtian Liberty? Why, 'tis to give the People Liberty to break the Laws at Pleaſure, and leave them to the Guidance of their own Humours without Controul; by this means they teach them to leave the Church, and go to Conventicles to aſſert their Chriſtian Liberty; and to

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encourage them therein, they pervert for them two or three Texts of Scripture; as that of our Saviour; *Call no man master upon earth*, Matt. 23. 10. which is a caution against receiving the corrupt Doctrines and Traditions of the *Phariſees*, is by them interpreted for rejecting the Lawful Commands of our Superiors. That of the Apoſtle, *Be not ye the ſervants of men*, 1 *Cor.* 7. 23. which forbids the inſlaving the Conſcience to the imperious Dictates of falſe Teachers; is ſo expounded, as to take off all the Obligation of good Orders. St. *Peter's Lording it over God's heritage*, 1 Pet. 5. 3. they interpret of the Tyranny of the Biſhops, and thereby take off their Followers from all Subiection to them. So rarely do they Expound their Chriſtian Liberty, which they make uſe of as a pretence to ſhake off the Yoke, and evade all Obedience to Government.

Yea, they enlarge this Liberty ſo far, as to think themſelves obliged not to do what is Commanded, and likewiſe to do what is Forbidden, in the defence of it: So that if the Magiſtrate ſhould forbid what he would have done, and command what he would not;

these Men would be caught in their own snare, and be obliged by their own Principles, to do as he would have them.

And yet they stile this humourſome and croſs-grain'd ſort of Liberty, a privilege purchaſed for them by Jeſus Chriſt, and a Depoſitum committed to the care and keeping of the Chriſtian Church; as if Chriſt had given them a Diſpenſation from Obſerving all good Order, and let them looſe to all Diſobedience: Whereas ſuch a Privilege is ſo far from being worth the purchaſing, that 'tis much better to be without it; for this would be an engine of perpetual Diſcord and Confuſion; the miſchief whereof both to Church and Kingdom, is too viſible to need laying open.

But did theſe Men, who talk ſo much of Chriſtian Liberty, allow that Liberty to others when they were in Power, which they now claim to themſelves?

No; quite otherwiſe; none were ever more rigid Impoſers, and more notorious Infringers of Chriſtian Liberty than they; 'tis well known that they preſſed the Covenant upon Mens Conſciences with far greater rigor, than any ever did Conformity; yea, thoſe very

very Men that alledg'd Christian Liberty against Conforming to the Orders of the Church, Compell'd others to take the Covenant with Pike and Pistol, threatning loss of Life, Goods, and Lands, on such as refused it. I suppose you have heard with how severe and intolerable Penalties they Prohibited the Common-Prayer, and with what mercileſs rigor they were executed on those that used it. When some put in their own Plea of Christian Liberty for a little mitigation, they were answered, 'Twas no Impeachment of Christian Liberty to wear those Golden Chains about their Necks: And when they had laid the most intolerable bonds and burthens upon Mens Consciences, they told them, that 'twas Prophaneneſs and Rebellion to say, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* We find one of them commending the Parliament for endeavouring to fence the Vineyard with a setled Militia, to gather out the Malignants as Stones, and to make a Winepress in it for the squeezing of Delinquents.

But what shall we say of that barbarous Infringement of Christian Liberty, in pressing the Directory upon the Con-

ſcience of their Sovereing King *Charles* the Firſt, which they knew was againſt it; they denied him the uſe of the Liturgy, though he earneſtly deſired it; yea, they would not allow him to uſe any other ſet Form of Prayer in his own Houſe, though he declared it againſt his Conſcience to join in a way of Worſhip, where it was wholly uncertain what the Miniſter would ſay to God, *hoping* (as he told them) *that they would not offer Violence to the Conſcience of their Sovereign*; yea, they denied him the Attendance of his own Chaplains, to Direct and Comfort him in his Troubles; *A piece of Rigor and Barbarity* (as himſelf ſtiles it) *greater than is ever uſed by Chriſtians to the meaneſt Priſoners, or greateſt Malefactors.* So that this pretence to Chriſtian Liberty, is a Device made uſe of to ſerve their own turn, and to be deni'd to all others; which plainly ſhews the Fallacy and Falſhood of it. I am,

Eikon Baſ.

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER XIII.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Diſſenters to keep up their Schiſm, is a pretence to better means of Edification; this is a Device occaſioned by the Ignorance of the People, and cheriſhed in them by the Subtilty of their Teachers. They cannot Edify (they tell us) ſo well in the Church as in the Conventicle; and they Profit more by the Sermons of the one, than they can by the other.

This is a plauſible and popular Plea for Separation, and hath help'd much to increaſe the Party; for it carries a fair ſhew of Zeal and Care for their Souls, to look out for the beſt means of Edification; none, they think, can blame them if they hear thoſe Sermons by which they Profit moſt, and follow thoſe Teachers that beſt promote their Eternal Welfare.

But let us examine what Truth there is in this pretence; to this end we muſt

enquire, What it is to Profit by Sermons? And who are the moſt Edifying Preachers? Becauſe there are great and dangerous miſtakes in both.

To Edify then, or Profit by Sermons, is, *Firſt*, To have our Judgments well inform'd in the Knowledge of God, and the Myſteries of the Goſpel. And *2dly*. To lead our Lives according to it; ſo that they who moſt truly and plainly Expound the Holy Scriptures, and beſt apply them to all the ends and purpoſes of a Holy Life, are indeed the moſt Edifying Teachers; and they who moſt grow in Grace, and the ſound Knowledge of God, and abound moſt in all the Acts of Virtue and a Good Life, are moſt Edified by the Prayers and Diſcourſes they hear, and are the beſt Proficients in Chriſt's School.

Now there is no Church in the Chriſtian World that affords better means of Edification to all theſe purpoſes, than that whereof we are Members: For there the Word of God is faithfully Preach'd and Expounded, by which we may be thoroughly Inſtructed in all Divine and Sacred Knowledge: There all the Articles of the Creed, containing all that is neceſſary to be Believ'd, are

plainly

plainly and practically unfolded to us, by which we may be built up in our moſt Holy Faith: There we have the Lord's Prayer, the moſt perfect of all Prayers, together with other excellent and well-order'd Prayers compoſed by it, daily ſounding in our Ears, by which we are directed in all our Addreſſes unto God, to offer up a Pious, Sober, and Well-compos'd Devotion.

There, again, we hear the Ten Commandments frequently Read and Explain'd to us, in the full latitude both of the Precepts and Prohibitions contain'd in them; by which we may learn how to walk in the whole courſe of our lives, ſo as to Pleaſe God, and Profit our ſelves.

In a word; There is no Duty incumbent on us, either with relation to God, our Neighbour, or our ſelves, but what is clearly opened, and by the moſt proper and preſſing motives exhorted to: And there is no Sin or Tranſgreſſion againſt either, but what we are by the moſt convincing Arguments dehorted from in the Publick Aſſemblies of the Eſtabliſhed Church.

Whereas in the Separate Meetings of Sectaries, the Holy Scriptures are very badly Expounded, and too often very

ſadly Perverted. The fore-mentioned excellent Models and Abridgments of the Chriſtian Religion, I mean, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments, are ſeldom or never rehearſed in the Ears of the People; by which neglect they are carried on and kept in Ignorance of a great part of their Duty. The great Duties of Unity, Peace, and Order, in the Church of Chriſt, can never be fairly explained or inculcated in thoſe places, where their very Meetings are a contradiction to them. The heinous nature and guilt of Schiſm muſt not be laid open, ſince all their Conventicles are founded upon it. The tender point of Diviſions, ſo ſharply rebuked by the Apoſtle, muſt not be touch'd upon there, where ſo many love or live by them.

And now let any impartial Man judge, where we are like to find the beſt means of Edification, either in the publick Aſſemblies of the Church, where the whole mind and will of God is truly and faithfully Revealed; or in the Separate Meetings of Sectaries, where the bare upholding of them, tempts them to ſo much Falſification.

But where then lies the Fallacy or Miſtake in this matter? Why, the People are impos'd upon by falſe Notions of Edification. For,

Firſt, ſome take the fond Opinions and affected Phraſes of a Party, for the beſt means of Edification: Thus if they hear any diſcourſing of *Election* and *Reprobation*, in which they commonly canonize themſelves, and reprobate others; if they ſaucily pry into and paſs their Judgment in thoſe ſecret things that belong to God, and withal miſinterpret the reveal'd things that belong to them, they think themſelves mightily edified, though they know nothing aright in thoſe matters. Again; if they hear them talking of *Rolling upon Jeſus Chriſt*, and *Lying flat upon the Promiſes*, with other ſuch Myſtical and Phraſe-Divinity, they prick up their Ears, and are wonderfully pleas'd with the unintelligible Jargon. If they happen to go to the Church, and hear the plain Senſe of the Goſpel laid open, and the true Notions of Juſtification, Regeneration, Converſion, and Salvation explain'd to them, they think themſelves unedified, becauſe they are not amus'd with ſome fine Conceits about thoſe things. The truth is, the leſs

they

they understand, the more they are edified; which makes them go to the Church with prejudice, where they are entertain'd with sound Doctrine, and the sober Notions of Religion; and to delight only in the Mystical and Vain Talk of the Conventicle, whereby they mistake the true means of Edification.

Again, *2dly*, They mistake the false Heats of Fancy, for the true Warmth of the Heart; and think they have profited by a Sermon, merely because they were pleas'd: This is a frequent and fatal Delusion, for false Teachers commonly work upon the Passions of their Hearers, without a right informing their Judgment, and so make them think themselves edified, when they are all the while merely deluded: To this end, a melting Tone, solemn Looks, vehement Action, are made use of; and having by these Arts warm'd their Imaginations, make them believe they are fired with a true Zeal, and so strangely edified, as if they felt some extraordinary Impulses of the Holy Ghost stirring within them, when all the while 'tis no other than the Motion of the Animal Spirits, occasion'd by the Heats of Fancy, and are chiefly owing to their

Bodily

Bodily Temper. Now to cry up these for Edification, and going on to Perfection, is (as one hath observ'd) to betray the People into the power of every Impostor, who hath the knack to raise these Heats, and make them pass for Reason and Conviction of Mind. These mortify no Sin, nor improve any Virtue, and so make men neither wiser nor better than they were before, but rather more fickle and inconstant, and apt to be carried about with every Wind of Doctrine. Whereas true Edification helps men to grow in Grace and Knowledge, and leaves more firm and lasting Impressions of Virtue upon the Soul.

Moreover, this pretence to better means of Edification, sets the common People a judging between better and best, of which by reason of their Ignorance and Instability they are incompetent Judges: Indeed there is so much of Humour and Fancy in mens Comparisons between Teachers, that lays them open to great Mistakes and Inconveniences about it; it fills the best-meaning Persons among them with endless Scruples whom to chuse, and where to go, and is a Principle of great Giddiness and Instability.

Yea,

Yea, the miſchief of it is too great to have any Licenſe or Countenance given to it in any well-conſtituted Church; for it breaks the Order, Peace, and good Government of it, and naturally creates Diviſion and great Diſtractions; it ſets people a gadding after new Inventions, and neceſſarily brings on the Guilt of Schiſm.

So that this pretence confutes it ſelf, and proves a great hindrance to the Edification it pretends to. He that conſtantly attends the Prayers and Inſtructions of his Parochial Guide, ſhall learn and profit more than he that hunts about for better means of Edification: *A rolling Stone* (we ſay) *never gets Moſs:* And he that runs after and heaps to himſelf Teachers, may have his itching Ears tickled, but ſeldom hath either his Heart renew'd, or his Life reform'd by ſuch means.

Again, By keeping cloſe to a ſettled Paſtor, men may have all the Parts and Duties of Religion one time or other explain'd and applied to them; and this will tend more to true Edification, than the Oratory of looſe and general Diſcourſes, which for the moſt part only enters into one Ear, and goes out at the other.

Beſides,

Beſides, this running after new Teachers, is a great diſcouragement to a Faithful Paſtor, to ſee himſelf forſaken of his Flock, and find them following Wolves in Sheeps cloathing: This tends at once to hinder the Preparations of the Miniſter, and the Proficiency of the People, who might have better Sermons, and profit more by them, if they would more frequently attend them.

In a word, This wanton Humour of leaving their own Miniſter, to go where they can profit beſt, hath been ſeverely condemn'd by the Party that now cheriſh it in their Followers: Mr. *Edwards* in his *Gangræna* mentions it as one of the great Errors of the Times in which he liv'd: And both Presbyterians and Independents have inveigh'd againſt it, as a Principle of great Looſeneſs and Vanity; as may be made appear, if need be. I am,

SIR,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

SIR,

THE laſt Artifice of Diſſenters that I ſhall mention, is, Their ſetting up and encouraging little private Schools of Philoſophy, to prepare and qualify Perſons for the holding of Conventicles.

The deſign of this Stratagem is to keep up a Succeſſion of Factious Teachers, and to propagate the Schiſm to future Generations: There are ſome Sects indeed that take no Care about the Education or Commiſſion of their Holders-forth, but leave this Office entirely to the Natural Endowments and Volubility of Gifted Brethren: But there are others, and particularly the Presbyterians, who being many of them bred up in the Univerſities themſelves, and thereby knowing ſomething of the Method and Benefit of that Education, erect private Schools, wherein they do ſomething to the like, though for the moſt part to very little purpoſe: They

are

are ſenſible of the Neceſſity and Uſefulneſs of Human Learning to qualify for the Miniſtry; and therefore fearing leſt their Conventicles might fall, through the groſs Ignorance of thoſe that muſt uphold them, ſomething muſt be taken care of this way, to fit them for this great Work; at leaſt, ſome ſmattering of Learning muſt be had or pretended to, to give ſome Countenance to the Cauſe: And indeed, a little of it, with a great deal of Confidence, will go a great way to deceive the Vulgar.

They know moreover, that the preſent Heads of the Party are all mortal, and going off the Stage, and therefore leſt the Faction ſhould dye with them, care muſt be taken to raiſe up more, to preſerve the Succeſſion, and derive the Impoſture to future Ages.

Beſides, the breeding up of theſe Emiſſaries, affords no ſmall Gain to the preſent Craftsmen, and the Leaders are like to get more by their Learning, than the People to whom they are ſent, who are in danger to be miſ-led by them, and merely beguil'd by their vain Philoſophy.

Thus do they erect private Seminaries againſt the moſt renowned Univerſities, merely to qualify them to keep up

private

private Conventicles againſt the beſt eſtabliſh'd Church in the Chriſtian World. Which is a very ſerviceable Stratagem to uphold the Party, and propagate the Schiſm.

But for the better underſtanding of this Device, let us enquire into the Maſters and Scholars of theſe ſeparate Academies, together with the Learning profeſs'd and taught in them, And

Firſt, For the Heads and Maſters in theſe Seminaries: They are buſy not only in ſowing Diviſions themſelves, but in planting of Tares, and watering of Weeds, that may ſpring up when they are gone, to infeſt the Church, and choak the good Seed of ſound Doctrine preach'd in it: A Noble Employment indeed! and worthy the Ambaſſadors of Chriſt, to be Teachers of Schiſm, and Promoters of Faction; and not to be content only to divide the Church, and rend the Body of Chriſt for their own time, but to breed up others to ſucceed them in this great Work, and raiſe a new Race of Diſturbers, for the Edification of Poſterity: They are unwilling the Church ſhould be ever ſettled in Unity and Peace, and therefore are hard at work to propagate Diſſentions, to

inſtill

inſtill their Sophiſtry into their Diſciples, and to lay a foundation for Diſcord in future times.

But if any of theſe grand Teachers of Philoſophy in private Schools have been Graduates in the Univerſities, as we are told ſome of them are, How ſhall we excuſe them from Perjury, in violating the Oaths taken by them to the contrary? And if any of them have been Epiſcopally Ordain'd, according to the Rites and Orders of the Church of *England*, as 'tis well known ſome of them have been, What can they ſay for acting thus contrary to the Declarations and Subſcriptions required in it, and training up others in Nonconformity and oppoſition to it? I think it will not be amiſs for theſe Men to conſider, whether that tenderneſs of Conſcience, they ſo much pretend to, can conſiſt with the Violation of thoſe Engagements; or whether it be not either the Weakneſs of their Heads, or the Falſeneſs of their Hearts, that gives them ſo eaſy a Diſpenſation from obſerving of them.

As for the Scholars thus train'd up by them, they are plainly nurs'd up in a Schiſm, and not only taught to go them-

ſelves, but to lead others in the ways of Separation; whereby they are bred up Enemies to the Government, both in Church and State, miſled from the ways of Truth and Peace, and ſo unhappily directed out of the way that they ſhould go.

But what are the Arts and Methods of Inſtruction made uſe of in theſe Seminaries to this purpoſe? Why,

Firſt; They are taught all the little Scruples and Cavils that have been raiſed againſt the Liturgy and Diſcipline of the Church, to beget in them the greater averſion from both.

Next, They are furniſhed with Seditious Books written againſt them, to heighten and increaſe this averſion.

Then they are taught not only to prefer, but to learn the Art of Extemporary Effuſions in Prayer, the great Idol and Support of all ſeparate Meetings; to this end they are ſometimes put upon the practice, and trying their skill in this Exerciſe, with Directions to aſſiſt their Invention, and help their Fluency.

After this they are taught to modulate the Tone of the Voice, ſometimes raiſing it to ſuch a key or degree of Vehemence, at other times falling to ſuch a

Cadence,

Cadence, as may best take and work upon the fancies of the People.

These and such like Arts, apt to deceive, are the great things that are taught in these Seminaries: Devices never heard of or learn'd in any well-established Church, and utterly destructive of all Order and Sobriety in Religion.

But what is it that moves the Dissenters thus to draw from the Two Famous Universities of this Land, and to set up and encourage these private Nurseries against them? Why,

First; They know that the Education and good Literature of those Places, breed up Youth in a due Conformity to the Discipline and good Orders of the Church; and all that are admitted to them, are by Oaths and all manner of Obligation tied to a firm adherence and observance of them; the wise Instructions and Examples of those Places, train them up in the way that they should go, which keeps them ever after from departing from it. So that they whose design it is to promote and propagate Divisions, must keep as many as they can from those places, where they are so well taught and arm'd against them.

Thoſe Famous Seminaries of Learning and ſound Religion, have ever brought froth the ſtoureſt Champions to defend the Truth, and confute the Errors of all times; 'tis no wonder if Hereticks and Schiſmaticks bear no good will to thoſe Places and Perſons that ſo expoſe and fruſtrate their evil Deſigns.

But the better to countenance theſe private Schools, the upholders of them endeavour to faſten the blackeſt Calumnies upon our Renowned Seats of Learning and Education; though for their Order and Diſcipline, together with all other advantages and encouragements of good Literature, they far excel all the Univerſities in the World, and are therefore reſorted to and admired by all Strangers; yet theſe Sons of Slander ſeek not only to leſſen, but to blacken them too by their foul and Unjuſt Aſperſions; they delight to talk of the Vices and Looſeneſs of thoſe Places, and call thoſe Schools of the Prophets by no better name, than Schools of Lewdneſs and Debauchery; which is done merely to beget an ill Opinion of them, and to exalt their little Nurſeries of Schiſm and Sedition above them.

Thus

Thus do they ſerve the Univerſities, as they do the Church, throwing all the dirt they can upon them, the better to ſerve their own ends on both.

Now the miſchief of this Device may be eaſily gueſs'd from its pernicious influence both in Church and State; for if the Happineſs of a Nation depends upon the good Education and Wiſdom of its Members, and the hopes of future times are founded upon the well Training up of thoſe that live to them; what unſpeakable evils muſt enſue from thoſe private nurſeries of Ignorance and Diſorder? Which is a matter well worthy the Care and Wiſdom of Superiors to prevent. For

Ever ſince the foundation of the Church hath been ſhaken, things in the State have been out of courſe; and 'tis in vain to hope for Settlement in the Latter, whilſt the Former remains looſe and unſettled: And therefore Chriſt's Vineyard ſhould be fenc'd and guarded, not only againſt the Wild Boar of the Foreſt, that would lay it waſte, but againſt all the little Foxes that would undermine it.

To Conclude all; May the Church of *England* ever Continue in the Purity of its Doctrine, Worſhip, and Diſcipline: May the Two Famous Univerſities of this Kingdom ſtill flouriſh, to ſupply it with Able, Faithful, and Learned Paſtors: And may Both be ſo Favoured with the Providence of God, and the Protection of Princes, that the Gates of Hell may never prevail againſt Either. Which are the hearty Wiſhes and Prayer of,

SIR,

Your Cordial Friend,

A. B.

A POST-

A POSTSCRIPT.

SIR,

THERE is another ſerviceable Device of Diſſenters that muſt not be omitted, and that is, Their ſettling and maintaining a ſecret Correſpondence between their Brethren in all parts of this and the Neighbouring Kingdom; whereby they communicate to each other the Deſigns of the Party, and join in ſecret Methods and Confederacies to promote them. By this they give and take Meaſures in Electing Members for Parliament, and preparing Addreſſes and Petitions to them; hereby they learn and agree in the ſame arts of weakening the Church, and ſtrengthening the Conventicle, together with all other means of forming and advancing their Deſigns.

And theſe are the more dangerous, becauſe they are carried on in the dark, and like inviſible Darts, wound without being ſeen; as alſo becauſe they are coloured over with a ſeeming Zeal for Religion and Reformation of Manners, and carried on with Prayer, and a great ſhew of *Piety* and *Devotion*.

Theſe things are evident, not only by many former Intriegues managed and promoted this way, but more plainly by a late Letter written to a Nonconformiſt Teacher, Superſcribed thus, *To Mr.* Saunders *Miniſter of the Goſpel in* Oxford; which by a miſtake fell into the hands of another Perſon of the ſame Name; a true Copy whereof is as followeth: *New-*

Newbury June 7. —98.

Reverend Sir,

I *Had a Letter last Week, by the Direction of the Committee of Miniſters and Gentlemen appointed at* London, *for ſettling a Correſpondence of the Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters and Congregations throughout this Kingdom, for the Advancement of the Intereſt of Religion, and Reformation of Manners, with the Articles there agreed upon in order thereunto, and a deſire to Communicate them ſpeedily to the Brethren in theſe Parts, that (if poſſible) a general Meeting might be had this Summer in* London.

Purſuant whereunto, 'tis deſired that you would not fail to come your ſelf, and bring with you one Prudent Perſon of your Congregation, choſen for that end (according to the Method reſolv'd on at London) *to meet ſeveral of your Brethren, and the Members of their reſpective Congregations, here at* Newbury *on* Wedneſday *the* 22*d Inſtant, to conſider of the ſaid Propoſals which ſhall be laid before you, and the proper Method to obtain ſo deſirable an end.*

You are deſired to be here on Tueſday *in the Evening, that we may enter on our Work on* Wedneſday *Morning, reſolving (God willing) to ſpend ſome time in Prayer before we begin.* I am, SIR,

Your Affectionate Brother,
and Servant in the Lord,

William Taylor.

FINIS.